

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/11  
Reading Passages (Core)

## Key messages

- Proof reading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **1(g)** candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same word in their answer to the whole phrase that they used in the underlined word question but should elaborate on the definition given in the latter and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole quotation in relation to the question.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all 3 bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point but ensure the first two bullet points are tethered to the text.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct register and format for **Question 2** and follow the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.
- **Question 3** summary points should include precise relevant detail from the passage.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

#### 1(a)

**Using your own words, explain what pressures the writer was under when he visited New York City (paragraph 1, 'Of my wanderings ....').**

A large majority of candidates scored at least one mark for this question with many gaining two marks. The writer experienced the problem of doing many jobs, in the rain, in a limited time schedule. Candidates needed to identify both the job difficulties and the pressure of time to gain both marks. Some candidates missed the focus of the question and identified that the rain was a pressure or that the writer was wet, and this made him uncomfortable.

#### 1(b)

**Using your own words, explain the effects that the rain had on the writer (paragraph 1, 'Of my wanderings ....').**

A number of candidates responded generally to this question by stating that the writer's clothes and/or shoes got wet and as a result he had to 'cover himself'. These answers, of course, were obvious regarding common sense because if it is raining heavily people will indeed get wet. Close reading of paragraph 1 of the passage shows, however, more detailed description of the effects of the rain on the writer. Firstly, he was often forced to seek shelter or go inside buildings. Candidates who wrote answers such as 'He was forced to cover himself' did not gain a mark because this covering of himself could have been referring to a hat or an umbrella, for example, which is not stated in the text. Secondly, the heavy rain was making his raincoat become very wet on the inside. As noted above, in heavy rain his clothes would obviously get very wet, but

this is a common sense statement not linked specifically to paragraph 1 in the text. The reader is clearly told that the writer was drenched or soaked to such a degree that the water seeped through to the inside of his raincoat. Candidates who identified this or part of this effect were awarded the mark. Thirdly, the writer's shoes might well have been wet, but the text is unclear about this. It simply tells us that the writer left a puddle on the floor of every building that he entered. This dripping could have originated from the inside of his raincoat or trousers, or even his shoes, for example, but this is not made clear in the passage. A number of candidates answered that one of the effects of the rain on the writer was the 'unfriendly looks' he received because of the pool of water about his feet, but this was not credited as a direct result of the rain itself.

1(c)

**Using your own words, explain what the writer means by 'dismissing my attempts at evasion' (lines 10–11).**

For this question some candidates relied on close lifting from the phrase to couch their respective answers by including 'dismissing' and 'evasion'. Such responses were not credited because either they were descriptive of the given phrase or simply gave a circular answer. Those candidates who identified that the writer tried to avoid answering the questions gained the mark, and those candidates who focused on the money-changer's ignoring or discounting of the writer's attempt to avoid the questions also gained the mark.

1(d)

**Using your own words, explain how the manager of the bookshop at first behaved towards the writer and how the writer reacted to this behaviour (paragraph 3, 'Similarly, in a ...').**

The majority of candidates gained at least two marks on this question with a few scoring full marks. Most responses focused on the bookshop manager's initial rudeness to the writer or his refusal to help him look up books and the writer's subsequent angry retaliatory outburst that such treatment would not have happened in England. Very few candidates, relatively, identified the bookshop manager's suspicion about the honesty of the writer. A number of candidates went on to describe the bookshop owner's subsequent change of attitude to the writer, but this was, of course, outside of the question remit, and related to 1(e).

1(e)

**Give one example of the way that the manager's behaviour changed towards the writer (paragraph 3, 'Similarly, in a ...').**

The key focus of this question was **one** example of the manager's change in behaviour such as 'he gave addresses', 'came out into the rain', 'directed him to a restaurant'. Many candidates, however, responded with a more general summary about him becoming kinder or helpful rather than a specific example which the question asked for. Such answers were rewarded if they had indicated the degree of change such as 'very' or 'extremely' helpful or had clearly demonstrated that the manager had gone out of his way to help the writer.

1(f)

**Using your own words, explain:**

**(i) what the writer did with his wet clothes when he returned to the hotel (paragraph 4, 'I was so wet ...')?**

Many candidates gained the mark here by indicating that the writer left his clothes on the floor or at the hotel, or did not pack them, throwing them on the floor. Those candidates who answered that he had 'shed' his clothes or had taken them off did not gain the mark.

**(ii) why he decided on this course of action (paragraph 4, 'I was so wet ...').**

The majority of candidates who answered **1(f)(i)** correctly also gained the mark for the reason he left the clothes at the hotel before he started on the next stage of his journey: namely, they were too wet to pack; or if packed they would have made the rest of his possessions wet; or there simply wasn't time to dry them out. Some candidates, who had missed the irony of 'and leave them behind for the benefit of New York City' answered that he was donating his clothes to charity. Others wrongly believed that he left the clothes because they were ruined or that they could never have been dried.

**1(g)**

**Give the meaning of the underlined words in the following three phrases as the writer uses them. Then explain how the phrases help to suggest the narrator's thoughts about his experiences with the weather conditions and the people he met in New York.**

In **1(g)** candidates should note that the focus in **1(g)(i)** was on the meaning of the underlined word and for **1(g)(ii)** the focus was on the overall meaning of the phrase regarding the writer's thoughts about the weather conditions and the people he had met in New York. It was important that candidates did not simply repeat the same words in their answers directed at the whole phrase that they had used in **1(g)(i)** but should have elaborated on the definition given in the latter, and focused their responses on describing the effect of the whole quotation in relation to the question.

**'It rained with a patient fury.' (lines 2–3).**

**(i)**

This was a challenge for candidates because of the oxymoron but many were able to explain 'patient' as indicating calm or sustained or constant, and were credited for doing so. A minority of candidates gave their meaning of 'fury' as opposed to 'calm'.

**(ii)**

Those candidates who simply repeated what they had written in **(g)(i)** or lifted the word of the question without any elaboration did not gain a mark here, but a significant number of candidates did answer correctly that the rain was very heavy or sustained, and in some cases, even violent or angry.

**'The money-changer cross-questioned me like a prosecution counsel' (line 9).**

**(iii)**

The two-word title proved very difficult for many candidates although quite number of candidates were able to link it to law courts, solicitors, judges, and even policemen. Answers such as these were credited. Answers which focused on the writer as being a criminal and not the money-changer were not credited although if this was repeated in **(g)(iv)** it was awarded a mark.

**(iv)**

The most common explanation of the whole phrase was the high number of questions asked and the fact that the writer was being interrogated. A number of candidates perceptively described these questions as intrusive and personal, adding that the writer had been treated like a criminal.

**'I said farewell to them as they lay in a sodden heap in the middle of the floor' (lines 29–30).**

**(v)**

Very few candidates understood the meaning of 'sodden' in this reference and were unable to offer a meaning based on context. As a result, there were numerous No Responses leading inevitably to No Responses in **(g)(vi)**. Some of the attempted meanings focused on 'dryness' or 'heat' or 'untidiness'. Some of those candidates who did manage to interpret 'sodden' as wet were not credited the mark without an intensifier such as 'very' or synonyms such as 'soaking' and 'saturated'.

(vi)

There were few successful explanations for this question for reasons already noted above, but answers relating to a pool of water or the writer's sadness at leaving them were duly credited, as was the clothes being past their useful life. Some attempted explanations simply summarised the given reference in attempted own words and were descriptive rather than explanatory.

## Question 2

Imagine that you are the narrator in **Passage A**. Soon after this experience you write your journal about your time in New York City.

### Write your journal.

In your journal you should:

- describe your first impressions of New York City
- explain your thoughts and feelings about the people that you met there
- say what advice you would give to other people from your country who are considering visiting New York City.

Begin your journal: 'New York City has been busy to say the least ...'.

The most successful responses to this question used details from the passage and adapted them to write a journal about the time spent in New York City by the narrator. These responses comprised a convincing attempt to describe with appropriate development the overall experience of the narrator's visit with its contradictions about how the writer was treated by the people he met and his endurance of the very bad weather during his stay. Less successful responses were more likely to lift sections of the original and did little more than repeat points that were already there without going beyond the more obvious details. Those candidates who attempted to write in an appropriate register for a journal were credited but those who did not were not penalised. The weakest responses were those which bore little or no relevance to the original passage.

Those responses which did not include some version of the three specified points were unlikely to score higher for Reading than Band 4, but those responses which included additional focus points were not penalised and often gained additional credit. The relatively few responses which comprised narrative accounts based on the passage without any reference to the question guidelines did not gain higher band marks. As with previous papers, convincing and relevant development of the third bullet point was usually important to gaining higher band marks. Responses, however, which only touched upon recommendations for other people considering a trip to New York, yet contained detailed development of the first two bullet points which was firmly tethered to the passage, were also rewarded with higher band marks. As always, those candidates who attempted to write their articles in their own words as far as possible, were suitably rewarded for both Reading and Writing. Those candidates who mainly lifted phrases from the passage were unlikely to score higher than Band 4 marks for Reading or Writing.

As noted in the report on last summer's paper, a number of candidates treated **Question 2** as an imaginative writing task as opposed to a piece of directed writing based mainly on the information given in passage A. Some candidates wrote convincing accounts of a vibrant, multicultural city with its landmark buildings, yellow taxis, wonderful parks, and famous restaurants and department stores, thereby ignoring Stevenson's account and, indeed, its historical context. Such responses seemed to be more concerned with establishing an appropriate register which emphasised the tourist attractions of New York as it is today rather than developing the given information based on their respective reading and understanding of the passage. Such accounts often omitted Stevenson's itinerary in the city and the ambivalence of his encounters with the money-changer and the bookseller manager, and wrote of its wonderful sunny weather. It is very important that candidates identify the purpose of the writing task and shape their material to meet that purpose, bearing in mind the stated audience, in a relevant and convincing way.

Most candidates described in some detail the writer's first impressions of the city based mainly on the effects of the dreadful weather on both him and his clothes, as well as the busy nature of his visits to various establishments. The second bullet about the writer's thoughts and feelings regarding New Yorkers was usually grounded in the three rather contradictory meetings described in the passage: the respective meetings with the money-changer, the bookseller, and the hotelier where Stevenson stayed. The more

convincing comments balanced the initial, ostensible rudeness of the people met with the subsequent ostensible kindness and keen desire to help the writer. The kindness of the hotelier was duly rewarded in many accounts under the recommendation section with prospective visitors told to book their stay at his hotel. The less convincing comments about the people met there usually only covered one aspect of their respective behaviour such as either their rudeness or their helpfulness. Some candidates advocated patience with the initial hostility which might be encountered, giving reassurance that this would improve in time, especially if the New Yorkers were either castigated for their lack of warmth and/or reminded that their behaviour would not have been experienced by the traveller back home. This, it was recorded, would galvanise the citizens into showing their true altruism to visitors.

Very few candidates ignored point three relating to recommendations for future travellers and there was sensible advice about taking extra clothes and a strong raincoat and sturdy umbrella to deal with the elements likely to be encountered in New York.

In general, candidates demonstrated a willingness to engage with the task and wrote some convincing and interesting journals for prospective visitors to New York City.

### Question 3

Read carefully **Passage B**, The Millau Viaduct, in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer Questions 3(a) and (b).

Answer the questions in the order set.

What are the main features and history of the Millau Viaduct, according to **Passage B**?

Write your answers using short notes. Write one point per line.

You do not need to use your own words.

Write your answers using short notes. Write one point per line.

#### 3(a)

The key to gaining higher marks on **Question 3(a)** was avoiding repetition and answering the question by selecting relevant points, and therefore avoiding the inclusion of points not related to the question.

Candidates must make sure that the context of their answer is clearly stated rather than implied. Similarly, candidates should always restrict their answers to one clear point per line, and never extend the 10 lines to add extra points.

Many candidates scored well on this question with many gaining six marks or more. Some candidates lost marks by failing to include vital contextual detail in their answers. For example, 'Last connection on the A75 motorway' did not gain a mark because it did not include the word 'major', which implied in the passage there were other minor connections after the Millau bridge. Similarly, a number of candidates stated the bridge was 335 metres high whereas it was the mast of the bridge which was this high. This need for contextual precision was required not only in the points relating to the features of the bridge but also those points about its history. Some candidates wrote that the bridge was 'located in France' as opposed to the more specific 'South of France' or 'the small town of Millau'. In total there were three points relating to the bridge's comparative height in Europe and the world. Some candidates, again, lost marks because of omission of precise detail thus making their points ostensibly contradictory. The Millau Viaduct according to the passage is 'the tallest bridge in Europe' and the '13th highest bridge in the world'. It was also 'the highest cable-stayed bridge in the world'. It was vital for candidates, in order to gain these three marks, to include the respective contextual details of 'tallest in Europe', '13th highest in the world', and 'highest cable-stayed bridge in the world'.

Of the fourteen points identified in the mark scheme, eight related to features of the Millau Viaduct and six addressed its history. The features listed from the passage were mainly structural comprising size and engineering features, with only two points covering its aesthetic features. These two points (seven and eight) focused on the spectacular and stylish nature of the viaduct. Many candidates included 'a fantastic view of the valley' in their list of points which was not credited because it was not a feature of the actual bridge. Similarly, the likely occurrence that the viaduct 'will continue to inspire future engineers' was not a feature of

the bridge but a result of its beauty and awe-inspiring nature.

Only a small number of candidates gained full marks, although, as noted above, many achieved six or more. A few candidates forfeited marks by reducing their answers to one or two words thereby omitting essential detail resulting in vague points.

### **3(b)**

**Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the main features and history of the Millau Viaduct.**

**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.**

**Your summary should not be more than 150 words.**

Most candidates tried to use own words when writing the summary although sometimes that meant that the meaning was blurred. Some answers were well written but very long as candidates had tried to include too much information. Many responses had own words but lacked organisation.

The best answers comprised two clear paragraphs, one on the features of the Millau Viaduct and one on its history. Credit was also given to responses which demonstrated synthesis of linked points such as its comparative size against other European and worldwide bridges. A significant number of candidates did not restrict their responses to the question's parameters and therefore included some irrelevance as noted above. There were very few candidates whose summary comprised a complete lift from the passage.

Generally, many candidates wrote fairly concise summaries and attempted to answer in their own words as far as possible. The best responses were well focused on the passage and points were expressed clearly and concisely. The weakest responses were often verbose and unfocused, comprising either frequent lifting of phrases and sentences or unnecessary personal commentary. Candidates should remember to organise their material so that it does not read like a list of unrelated features, and to ensure that their material is as concise as possible rather than just brief. The inclusion of an assessment strand covering spelling, punctuation, and grammar accuracy did not have a significant effect on the marks awarded for **3(b)** on this paper, compared with marks awarded on earlier papers prior to last summer where there was no such focus in the respective mark schemes.

### ***Concluding Comments***

Overall, the paper was accessible to all. There were relatively few 'No Responses' except as noted above in **1(g)(v)** and **1(g)(vi)**, and most candidates completed the whole paper. The questions candidates found the most challenging were **1(c)** and **1(g)** as a whole. Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and many of the responses to **Question 2**, in particular, were of a good standard. It was clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for this paper and were confident in their approach.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/12  
Reading Passages (Core)

## Key messages

- Candidates should read all questions carefully to ensure that their answers are selective and relevant.
- In the sub-questions in **Question 1** where candidates are asked to answer in their own words, they should avoid lifting long phrases or whole sentences from the passage.
- In **Questions 1(g)(ii), 1(g)(iv) and 1(g)(vi)**, candidates should focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase not the underlined word explained in the previous question.
- In **Question 2**, candidates should read the question carefully to ensure that they adopt the correct 'voice'.
- In **Question 2**, candidates must remember to deal with all 3 bullet points attempting to develop the ideas in the passage, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to develop the details offered in the text for the third bullet point, using the passage to develop a plausible response.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct style and register for **Question 2** and avoid copying from the passage.
- In **Question 3(a)**, candidates should only make one point on each line and avoid repeating similar points.
- In **Question 3(b)**, candidates should try to reorganise the material and write in their own words where possible.

## General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. The vocabulary was within the range of candidates at this level; most candidates completed the paper in some detail and examiners reported seeing some high-quality responses to **Question 2**. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. The majority of candidates were familiar with the requirements of **Questions 3(a) and 3(b)**. There was very little evidence of candidates not working within the paper time limit and few examples of No Response answers. Where a response had not been attempted it tended to be to **Questions 1(g) or 3(b)**.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates identified the correct answer 'solitary'. A number incorrectly identified 'lonely' and some offered 'chestnuts'. A number of candidates did not follow the rubric of the question by identifying a single word instead offering a lifted phrase or sentence.
- (b) Most candidates gained both marks available for this question. Most stated that the song was sad and about her lover or partner. Candidates could reword the passage or gain credit for selecting relevant words. Excessive lifting denied the marks.
- (c) (i) A number of candidates explained that the writer was more energetic and received a mark for this question. Many lifted 'refreshed and revitalised' without showing understanding and were not rewarded.
- (ii) To gain this mark candidates needed to show understanding that Modestine began to move more quickly. A large number of candidates lifted 'forced her hooves to a livelier pace' which was not credited. Some did not refer to Modestine's pace at all instead referring to the inspiration of the moonlight.
- (d) For the first mark candidates needed to explain the misshapen shadows of either the writer or Modestine using their own words. A number of candidates were able to explain this in their own words, however many offered 'twisted', 'out of shape' or 'distorted' which denied the mark. For the second mark candidates needed to explain that the shadows moved or appeared to move. The majority of candidates did not refer to movement at all. Very few got both marks for this question.
- (e) (i) A number of candidates were able to explain that the music referred to was the sound of the wind or the breeze. Where candidates did not offer the correct answer, they tended to claim that the music was in his head, or that the music was soft, neither of which answered the question fully.
- (ii) To gain the mark for this part of the question, candidates needed to explain that danced in tunes means moved in time or any own words equivalent. A number of candidates could explain this correctly, but some were confused and discussed the trees moving rather than explaining the phrase in the question.
- (f) This was a very straightforward question and the vast majority of candidates got 2 marks by mentioning the fact that she was about to close the inn, that she had to relight the fire or that she had to cook her visitor supper.
- (g) The new layout of **Question 1(g)** has led to more carefully structured answers from the majority of candidates and there were fewer examples of candidates simply repeating meanings when asked for an explanation of the whole phrase. Where candidates did not define the meaning of the individual word in the first part of the question, they were credited with it in the next part where appropriate.
- (i) The majority of candidates were able to explain the word 'carpeted' as used in the context of the passage. Most offered the phrase 'covered' or 'layered'. Very few candidates offered an incorrect response.
- (ii) Many candidates found it challenging to explain the whole phrase in this question despite being able to attain marks for explaining the silence or emptiness of the road or the softness of the dust covering. Many simply repeated the quotation without attempting to explain it in their own words.
- (iii) The word 'gullies' caused problems for a number of candidates. A few did identify the idea of troughs, dips or valleys in the mountains, but some thought it was associated with intestines. Only a minority of candidates were able to gain this mark.



- (iv) Many candidates paraphrased the given quotation by lifting words from it, particularly the words 'monstrous skeleton'. Very few candidates were able to explain the distortion of the mountain caused by the moonlight, its immense size, or the eerie effect created.
- (v) This was the most accessible word in **1(g)** and a number of candidates were able to offer a correct meaning by citing the intensity of the darkness.
- (vi) Answers which focused on the noiselessness, loneliness or isolation here gained the marks. Some candidates also said it was mysterious or creepy and were rewarded. Again, many candidates simply repeated their explanation of opaque, lifted 'asleep and silent', or quoted the whole phrase.

## Question 2

For this task, the majority of candidates seemed to understand the need to address each of the bullet points given in the question and to give a credible account of the landlady's thoughts and feelings about the writer and her conversation with him. The vast majority of candidates were comfortable writing a personal journal offering an appropriately confiding and honest tone. The most successful responses used the ideas and details in the passage to address and develop each of the 3 bullet points. They described the landlady's reaction to the writer's late arrival the previous night, offered their impressions of the writer's journey through the French countryside, and then described her thoughts about his undertaking such a long and lonely trip with just a donkey for company. The ability to adapt the perspective from the writer's viewpoint to describe the landlady's impressions of the journey was a key differentiator in this question, as well as how carefully candidates looked for and used the details in the passage to address the bullet points.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three bullet points offering a balanced response to the whole task. However, although some candidates produced promising journal entries, they only focused on the first two bullets in the question, simply addressing the third bullet point by wishing him well on his onward journey or writing one sentence to express concern or sympathy. There was no attempt to use the details given earlier in the passage to muse about the peace and solitude experienced, the beauty of the journey, the bravery and self-denial of the writer, or this adventurous nature. These responses often gave convincing descriptions of landlady's irritation when the writer arrived so late, her softened reaction when she decided to give him supper and an account of his travels as told to her over the supper table. Many of the responses developed the ideas in the passage effectively for these 2 bullets, building up a convincing voice for the landlady and her growing interest in the writer who has arrived so unexpectedly at her inn. However, a significant number of candidates chose to largely ignore the third bullet point. This meant that opportunities to develop ideas in the passage about how the writer may have been perceived by local people as he journeyed through France on a donkey were not taken.

A number of candidates mistakenly thought that the woman singing the ballad was also the landlady which caused some confusion as they thought that she was or had been romantically involved with the writer. Some responses simply narrated the events of the passage in response to bullet 2 with no attempt to reframe them using the landlady's perspective. At times there were factual inaccuracies, sometimes linked to a lack of understanding of the 19th-century setting of the passage. A small minority of candidates merely copied extracts from the passage with very few own words or produced responses which were too close to the original passage. This was particularly problematic with bullet 2.

To gain the higher marks of Bands 1 and 2 for Reading it is essential that candidates develop ideas based on the passage rather than add their own imagined content. Very few responses this session wrote imagined responses, although there were a few candidates who ignored the passage and wrote about a different lonely journey, searching for gold, for example. All development of the ideas in the passage should be firmly tethered to the details given resulting in feasible extension.

The best responses in terms of reading – and there were a number – managed to develop imaginatively all three bullet points using and developing the finer details in the passage. These responses firmly tethered any development to the landlady's impressions of the writer developed through clear references to their conversation.

In terms of writing, many candidates wrote fluently using convincing vocabulary. Others were less convincing but sometimes expressed themselves clearly. The weakest responses were sometimes difficult to follow or relied very heavily on lifted material.

### Question 3

- (a) This question gave candidates the chance to boost their total marks by appropriate selection. It was generally answered quite well with many candidates making one point per line as instructed and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a small number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. Sometimes candidates included more than 10 relevant points, but by putting them more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks overall.

There were also some points repeated, most notably focused on the artificial island or the three sections of the crossing, or the linking of the two main cities. There was less repetition this session, but still inclusion of irrelevant points that did not address the question, mostly concerned with the history and politics of the planning of the bridge. Some candidates included 3 or more irrelevant points. The question clearly asked for points relating to the features of the bridge and its effects on the surrounding areas, but many candidates selected very generally without considering whether the question was being addressed. It is important that only relevant points are selected from the passage and that candidates focus carefully on the question.

- (b) A number of candidates were able to achieve Band 3 for clear, concise and fluent summaries mainly expressed in own words, however, many candidates' responses were Band 2 (some concision but dependent on the words of the passage). Many of these responses had lengthy sections that were irrelevant as they focused on the political history of the bridge rather than addressing the question. The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, tended to be lengthy, including unnecessary details, repetition or unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be rather wordy with lack of focus on the question. The weakest responses copied unselectively or were extremely brief.

Most candidates tried to write with some concision and to use own words where possible. Better responses managed to reorganise points and to stay focused on the two aspects of the question, although a large number did include irrelevant material. There were some responses which started off quite well but then became less relevant by starting to copy lengthy chunks of the passage. A good number of candidates lifted material selectively but comparatively few merely copied from the passage with no recasting. The most commonly lifted phrases were 'created a region with a population of 3.7 million', 'the position of the bridge near Copenhagen Airport also played a role', 'linking the bridge and the tunnel is the man-made island of Peberholm' and 'it is now easier than ever to live on one side of Øresund and work on the other'. The best responses were organised, concise, with some own words and sustained focus.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/13  
Reading Passages (Core)

## Key messages

- Proof reading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **1(g)** candidates should remember that they need to explain the each of the underlined words and then comment on the phrase as a whole. Some marks were lost by candidates who simply repeated their explanation of the underlined word in explaining the meaning of the phrase as a whole rather than elaborating on the first definition and focusing their response the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all three bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to look for clues within the passage and to develop those ideas, beyond the text, for the third bullet point.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct format for **Question 2** as well as following the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.
- When selecting points for **3(a)** candidates should be careful to enter only one relevant point on each line in the answer box as only one point is credited for each line.

## General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to virtually all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. The vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and the majority of candidates responded well to the more straightforward questions.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) Give one detail mentioned by the writer about the outside of the processing mill and one detail that he mentions about inside of this building (paragraph 1, 'We arrived by noon...') [2 marks]

The great majority of candidates gained both marks available. The appropriate details were; for the outside: brown building / two stories / water tanks / ladders on the roof; for the inside: it was dusty or contained rusty machinery. It is worth noting here that the question requires only stating one detail for each point.

- (b) Using your own words, explain what the writer means by 'contemplating this great hulk of useless building' (line 4)). [2 marks]

The key to gaining the both marks for this question was to identify that there was something that the writer was doing and the object of the writer's attention. Acceptable responses were: mulling

over/thinking about (or other similar terms); and the building being: huge/empty/defunct or unused. The majority of candidates correctly gave two appropriate details.

- (c) **What does the writer's use of the word 'temple' in the phrase 'like the temple of a forgotten religion' suggest about the mill and the precious metal that was processed in it (line 7)?** [2 marks]

The key to this question was to focus closely on the word 'temple'; there was a significant number of candidates who lost marks by trying what had happened to the workers and how they had 'forgotten' the place they used to work. The marks for this question depended on explaining that the building was large and silent or important and like a place of worship and that they worshipped the valuable gold and silver it contained.

- (d) **Why did the writer and his wife think there was a 'chill' in their arrival at the mine (line 14)?** [1 mark]

This question demonstrated the pitfalls of relying on repeating the words of the passage as it required the inference that the writer and his wife were affected emotionally perhaps feeling sad or empty. A good number of candidates understood this, but an equally large number failed to get the mark because they responded by lifting words or phrases from the passage as part of their answer.

- (e) **Give two details about the path between the mine and the Toll House that the writer followed (paragraph 3, 'Silverado Mine buildings ...').** [2 marks]

This was a question that could be answered by careful choice of words or phrases from the passage. A large number of candidates obtained two marks by giving a combination of two of the following details:

*there were fallen and dead trees / it went straight down the steep canyon / there was no break in the descent / it ended above the roof of the hotel*

- (f) **Give two statements made by the writer about the 'last outpost of the mine' that suggest that he thought it was fascinating and mysterious (paragraph 4, 'Signs remained...').** [2 marks]

The majority of candidates gained at least 1 mark for this task by offering the following:

*it was like a treasure cave in a fairy story / no boy could have left it unexplored*

- (g) **Give the meaning of the underlined words in the following three phrases as the writer uses them. Then explain how the phrases help to suggest the writer's thoughts and feelings about the surroundings of the Silverado settlement.**

- *'like the temple of a forgotten religion, the workers toiling somewhere else.'* (lines 7–8)
- *'buried in foliage, deep out of sight of Silverado, I stumbled upon a last outpost of the mine'* (lines 25–26)
- *'A stream of water dyed red with iron, danced out of the depths of the cave'* (lines 27–28)

Possible successful responses:

- 'toiling' – working hard*
- Whole phrase: it is empty / unused / like a place of worship / stress on how important it used to be.*
- 'outpost' – boundary / remains / sign / old part of*
- Whole phrase: it is wild / overgrown / hidden / found by accident*
- 'danced' – flowed / moved quickly*
- Whole phrase: water is rusty / odd colour / comes from deep inside / there is a sense of mystery / of having seen something unusual*

[1 mark for the explanation of each word; 2 marks for explanation of the whole phrase – 9 marks]

This question asked candidates to explain, in their own words, what the writer meant by the words underlined. Some candidates gave answers that would have been more appropriate to discussion of the whole phrase. However, many candidates recognised the need to explain just the underlined word and a good number of candidates gained three marks for this part of the task. It is also worth noting that a large number of candidates did not get more than one mark for explaining the whole phrase; this may have been because they repeated some of their explanation for the underlined word, or because they did not cover the whole of the phrase.

Less effective responses made general comments which were largely re-iterating the quotation or lifting the language from the phrase and simply produced a circular explanation without demonstrating a clear understanding of the effect of the individual phrases.

It is also important to note that each phrase requires a different explanation, as some less successful responses gave very similar explanations for all three phrases. As in previous reports, that the explanations of the phrases should be grounded in the context of the question as opposed to simple interpretations of the words used. A small number of the more successful responses made the connection between the atmosphere and the hidden, secretive aspects of the mine.

## Question 2

**Imagine that you are the wife of the writer in Passage A. It is the day after your arrival in Silverado and you are writing a letter to your parents in England about your travels.**

**Write your letter.**

**In your letter you mention the following details:**

- **what you have learnt about Silverado as it was in the past**
- **what it is like now and your thoughts when you arrived**
- **what you think your life will be like for the next two months and your thoughts about Robert's (your husband's) decision to visit there.**

**Base your responses on what you have read in Passage A, but do not copy from it. Be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullets.**

**Begin your letter: 'Well we're here at last, and I hope this letter eventually reaches you...'**

**Write about 200 to 300 words.**

**Up to 10 marks are available for the content or your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.** [15 marks]

For this task the majority of candidates seemed to understand quite clearly the need to address each of the bullets and to give a credible account of the events of the passage from wife's point of view. The majority of candidates gave answers with an appropriate register and voice for the writer's wife and a letter written to parents. Many used the suggested opening phrase, but it was not essential that they did so and some came up with equally appropriate openings. Most candidates covered the first two bullet points quite successfully and used relevant material from the passage. As in previous years the less successful responses tended to come from candidates who copied material rather than adapting it; this was true even for some candidates who produced more original material for the third bullet points. However, a good number of candidates attempted to cover the three bullet points in a balanced approach.

More successful responses were able to give a reasonable sense of first impressions and later discoveries which were an important component of a full answer. This included, in the most successful cases, a credible sense of a family relationship, especially where this informed responses to the third bullet point where some made very effective use of the idea that the writer and his wife had different ideas about the choice of visiting the mine. A good proportion of candidates had some success in attempting to address the third bullet point. Overall, the responses showed a very good understanding of the passage, the atmosphere of the place and the wife's thoughts and feelings about the visit.

Most candidates wrote correct, though relatively simple, sentences, with an adequate range of vocabulary and tried to use an appropriate register.

**Question 3**

**(a) Notes**

**What are the main features and history of the Forth Rail Bridge, according to Passage B?**

**Write your answers using short notes. One point per line.**

**You do not need to use your own words.**

**Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer. [10 marks]**

This question was answered very well with many candidates making one point per line and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a significant number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising – only one mark is awarded for each line regardless of the number of points it contains. Only a very small number of candidates included more than 10 marks worth of relevant points, but by putting more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks. Similarly, only the first 10 lines are marked, so candidates who added further lines and points were still only credited for points included in the first 10 lines. It is essential on this question that the candidate reads the question clearly to enough to ensure that they are picking out the appropriate material and equally that some attempt is made to set out the relevant points one on each of the 10 lines. This also contributes to avoidance of repeating points in the summary that follows.

**(b) Summary**

**Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the main features and history of the Forth Rail Bridge.**

**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.**

**Your summary should include all 10 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 100 to 150 words.**

**Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your writing. [5 marks]**

On the whole, although some students were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, were marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements or to focus mainly on one the two required elements.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/21  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- avoided copying and/or lifting from either text
- focused on the ideas and details in each passage rather than inventing untethered material
- used their own words appropriately and precisely when explaining, using and interpreting ideas
- considered carefully the particular evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show for each of the three tasks
- addressed tasks in the order set, paying attention to the guidance and instructions for each
- returned to the text when necessary to check understanding of an idea or important detail
- planned the ideas they would use and the route through their answer before writing
- gave equal attention to all aspects of each question
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose.

## General comments

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible. The majority were able to finish the paper within the time allowed and generally responses were an appropriate length, although some offered very short responses restricting their opportunity to demonstrate understanding and target higher marks. Occasionally, achievement was limited by a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task – for example, by writing from the wrong perspective in **Question 1**, explaining fewer than eight choices in **Question 2** or writing significantly more than the maximum of 250 words advised for **Question 3**. The most successful answers were able to modify the material in the passages skilfully and use it to show understanding, remaining focused on the specific demands of each task. Less successful responses were often too reliant on the language and structure of the original and/or did not pay sufficient attention to the details of the question. Whilst answers across the cohort covered the range of bands for each question, opportunities were often missed where candidates offered only explicit and/or more generalised points, misread or over-looked details and/or dealt unevenly with each part of the task in hand.

The majority of **Question 1** responses had attempted all parts of the task. Most candidates had paid attention to the instruction to write the journal entry from Sumitra's point of view, though a number wrote from the wrong perspective. Good responses included a range of relevant ideas that were developed effectively and supported by appropriate detail. Less focused answers demonstrated misunderstanding in relation to details of the text – for example, asserting that Stanley was aggressive or challenging in Sumitra's class and/or an officer in the military. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to interpret the material from the passage and often produced uneven responses which sometimes included extraneous content not referenced by or rooted in the text. The least successful responses tended to neglect the accident at break-time and were unable to select relevant information. Copying was sometimes evident, especially in response to the second bullet point: there is a significant difference between using textual detail in support of points and lifting whole sections of the text or key phrases. Reliance on the language of the text in order to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

For **Question 2**, candidates needed to make specific, detailed comments about their choices from the two specified paragraphs. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to demonstrate understanding of the writer's purpose and consider the connotations and associations of the language used. Most responses included a sufficient number of appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs and many contained accurate explanations of meanings. Fewer answers included the clear explanations of effects and images that are required for marks in the top bands. Some candidates missed opportunities to consider individual words within longer choices and demonstrate understanding at higher levels, repeating instead rather broad and vague comments and/or simply labelling devices without exploration of how the example was working within this particular context.

In **Question 3** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas and some understanding of the requirements of the task. Though all relevant points from the passage were covered over the range of answers seen, opportunities to target higher marks were missed by responses in the mid-range often as a result of repetition of aspects of the same idea from the text. In the most successful responses, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less successful responses copied and/or lifted phrases from the passage to communicate ideas. Reliance on the language of the text dilutes evidence of understanding and is to be avoided. Candidates should aim to use their own words as far as possible in this summary task.

Whilst Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, it is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing and plan their responses to avoid repetition between sections, awkward expression and errors that impede communication. Candidates should be aware that unclear style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to check and edit their responses.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

**You are Sumitra, the tutor at Stan's creative writing class. After the class today, you write a journal entry.**

#### **Write the journal entry.**

**In your journal entry, you should:**

- **describe your first impressions of the new students based on the introductions they gave while in the circle**
- **describe your thoughts about what happened in class today**
- **consider your plans for the next lesson and how you will manage the class and the students.**

**Base your journal entry on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.**

**Begin your journal entry: 'My first lesson today has given me a lot to think about ...'**

Stronger responses to this question utilised the passage efficiently by selecting relevant information and using it to draw conclusions regarding the principal characters to create a suitable style for tutor Sumitra's, journal entry. More successful responses were able to assume the position of the teacher to suggest her thoughts and feelings about her new students and the incidents that took place in class, and included plans for future lessons linked to and based on her observations. A number of candidates paid insufficient attention to the details of the question and wrote from Stan's perspective; this was self-penalising (particularly in relation to addressing the third bullet point). A number had also misread the inner thoughts of Stanley as spoken conversation, not recognising the use of flashback. Some continued this confusion into interpretation of Myfanwy Robert's behaviour; the '*triumphant smirk*' was seen as hers, and her behaviour towards Stan was described variously as antagonistic and belittling his writing. Others followed up the '*accident*' by considering the possibility that it was not an accident, and Myfanwy had deserved it, asserting incorrectly that it was Stanley rather than Robin who dropped the teapot. Better responses were able to distinguish between the time shifts and firmly tether any development to details in the passage.



In relation to bullet one, most candidates were able to identify the three main characters in the class, finding Miss Roberts the easier to name and develop points about. Some though had misread her ambitions – suggesting her desire to become a publisher rather than a *‘published writer’*. Better answers relayed a suspicion about Miss Robert’s arrogance and/or suggested that she may need careful handling to avoid dominating others in the group. Robin was also identified by most, and his shyness was sometimes linked to Stanley’s own reticence to read. Some sustained development was centred upon Robin and Stanley’s reluctance to share their limericks and Sumitra’s awareness of group dynamics, though Stanley’s character traits were more rarely explored successfully. Some candidates confused Stanley’s troubled school days with the present – suggesting the poor test results and demotion were a consequence/feature of Sumitra’s programme for the adult writing class. Many candidates also attributed his poor performance to bullying by other students rather than the attitude of his former teacher. Where candidates had grasped the influence of his past, better answers offered more than those suggesting merely that *‘something seemed to be bothering him’*. For example, in some journal entries Sumitra considered what might have caused Stan’s initial lack of confidence, noting his future promise as implied through his enthusiastic participation in the debate after break. A few potentially stronger answers did not identify individual characters and wrote more generally about the behaviour of unnamed people, missing opportunities to extend impressions and develop associations as evidence of close reading.

The second bullet point invited candidates to describe Sumitra’s thoughts and feelings about what had happened in class that day. Most candidates referred to the writing of limericks and reading/not reading them aloud, as well as the accident with the teapot, though did not always clearly describe who was responsible and/or include secure details of events. In responses where candidates convincingly assumed the role of Sumitra and her sensitivity to the events being described, development was more likely to be sustained. Some reading carefully noted an (overly) dramatic reaction of Myfanwy to a relatively minor event and/or expressed Sumitra’s concern that things could have been much worse but for Stanley’s actions. Other candidates missed the opportunity to describe and then develop the incident at break time with the teapot, passing it over too quickly. Some less secure responses described the accident as intentional, inventing an argument and Robin’s need for revenge. Others misread it as Stan, having been bullied by Myfanwy about his writing, throwing the tea over her. Often details were not considered/interpreted carefully – for example, *‘teapot’* and *‘tea cup’* were used interchangeably suggesting some confusion. Others got carried away – for example, suggesting evidence of a romantic interest between Stanley and Miss Roberts and drifting from the text with invented details. In the least successful answers there was also reliance on lifting, especially in relation to the incident at break-time. Commonly lifted phrases included: *‘performed a rebellious leap’*, *‘all looked on horrified’* and he *‘poured the remainder of his water bottle over her arm’*.

The final bullet point was often thinly addressed, with many candidates offering just a suggested lesson activity. Often suggested plans for activities appeared to draw on the candidates’ own experiences of school; writing haikus or narratives, or detailed studies of Shakespeare and Tennyson. Where these were carefully linked to details in the text, candidates were often able to develop their ideas to suggest how and why these might be effective. A number of candidates successfully extended the idea of Sumitra’s concern for her students’ welfare. They considered how she could offer support for less confident students – for example, how paired or group work might be effective – as well as how altered arrangements for break times might make future accidents less likely. Those reading closely also noted that Sumitra was expecting to receive further poems by email and were able to further extend the range of ideas they offered in connection to future plans as a result.

Strong responses to the task focused on all three bullet points, selecting and using material relevant to each part of the task. They contained a range of ideas with development closely related to the passage and carefully integrated detail. Where responses were less successful in targeting higher bands, there was often the sense that rather than returning to the text to identify and plan content for their answers in advance of writing, candidates had focused on more generic points, such as how joining a creative writing class might feel to them, with a more limited focus on the details of this passage concerned with this particular set of adult learners. The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response, taking account of how well it used language to respond in the required form of a journal entry, and how successfully it addressed audience and purpose. Occasionally, awkward expression and/or weaknesses in structure detracted from the overall effect. Efficient planning and checking allowed stronger answers to include a wide range of effective language and avoid errors that might impede communication. .

**Advice to candidates on Question 1:**

- read the whole passage carefully, more than once, including any information given in the introduction
- identify the key ideas and details you can adapt for use in your answer
- consider how the response to reading task is asking you to adopt a different perspective to that of the text – for example, by writing from the point of view of a character other than the narrator
- think carefully about audience and purpose before you begin writing
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- answer all parts of the question, covering each of the three bullet points in reasonable detail
- answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response written in the required style
- use relevant details from the passage to demonstrate close reading and make judgements – do not invent claims that cannot be supported by the text
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- you do not need to count the exact number of words in your response – the number of words suggested by the question is a guide and not a word limit.

**Question 2**

**Re-read the descriptions of:**

- (a)** Stan's memories of his school classroom in paragraph 4, beginning 'A stern face ...'  
**(b)** what happened at break-time in paragraph 16, beginning 'Suddenly a teapot ...'

**Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.**

Responses to **Question 2** are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. In **part (a)**, those candidates who had clearly understood the flashback and its impact on Stanley were able to tackle the imagery with some precision and imagination. The militaristic nature of the imagery was rarely explored in any detail and in some cases misunderstood. Candidates generally grasped the sense of Stan's feelings of disgrace, but then missed opportunities for showing close language analysis by repeating it as an explanation for other choices. Many candidates thought that Stan had been bullied by his classmates or more specifically, the '*larger child in front of him*'. Candidates who had muddled the characters of the teacher and the '*larger boy*' often continued this misunderstanding in relation to their explanations of the '*triumphant smirk*' and the '*voice poured over him like hot coals*'. Stan was variously seen as the one with the '*stern face*' or contorting his face '*into a triumphant smirk*', whilst others misinterpreted Stan as being proud of his results. This misreading of the flashback meant that some candidates reverted to offering denotations that were out of context and did not show an understanding of the notion of Stanley's feelings of shame.

In **part (b)**, some stronger responses had appreciated the overly dramatic, exaggerated nature of the incident. In less successful responses, exploration of precise meaning or effect was often replaced with a narration of events or generalised commentary on the scene, for example, '*it shows it was an accident*' or '*it shows how they reacted*'. There were often unrelated and unsupported comments about the teapot, though discussion of the other characters' reactions was usually more fruitful. There were a number of powerful examples that could have been chosen for analysis, and planning of relevant ideas ahead of writing would have helped some candidates to be more selective in their choices and effective in their explanations. Candidates who did not make precise selections, often were only able to then provide generalised and vague comments, sometimes repeating the language of the original – for example, '*this shows that Stan was ashamed*'.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured, unpicking words and phrases to consider meaning and effects throughout their response. Additionally, they had selected a range of examples carefully, including imagery, reflected on the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. They were able to link some choices to arrive at an overview – for example, exploring how the '*stern face presiding over ranks of desks*' and '*an army cadet's besmirched tunic buttons*' might create an extended military metaphor and create sympathy for Stan through suggestion of the authoritarian regime of his earlier schooling. The weakest responses offered few explanations beyond the very general. They sometimes adopted a 'technique spotting' approach, reliant on simply identifying literary techniques. This often led to generic, empty comments about the effects of such

techniques rather than comments related to the words themselves and limited the response. A feature of weaker responses was a list of choices at the beginning of the answer, followed by a general comment. Candidates relying on this approach were rarely able to show understanding of how language was working. Some candidates offered single word choices only, not always selecting the most appropriate words – for example, offering ‘*paper towels*’ instead of ‘*proffering paper towels*’ or ‘*asked*’ instead of ‘*asked calmly*’ – and did not consider their choice in the context of the passage. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice – for example, suggesting that ‘*crash-landed*’ means that the teapot crashed, or that ‘*abject apologies*’ means that Robin apologised.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- identify a range of relevant words and phrases that seem powerful to explain in your answer to **part (a)** and **part (b)**
- do not write out whole sentences, or only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase – focus your selection
- treat each of your choices separately – do not present them as a list or give a general comment to try to cover all of them
- avoid repeating the wording of the choice as an explanation of effect
- avoid generalised comments
- if you are unsure of effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) you have identified
- to explain effects, consider the feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- do not just label the literary devices you notice, consider exactly how each example is working in context
- allow time to edit your answer – for example, to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

#### Question 3

What is the key advice for writing online, according to **Passage B**?

You must **use continuous writing** (not note form) and **use your own words** as far as possible.

Candidates appeared to find this task accessible with many scoring more than half marks. Successful responses often showed evidence of having planned beforehand both the content and route through their answer. They had identified those points that were potentially relevant to the focus of the question (the key advice for online writing) and reflected on their potential answers to refine their ideas, avoid excess and organise their ideas sensibly. They carefully considered the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for the selective summary task. Less effective responses tried to paraphrase the original, by substituting (sometimes inappropriate) vocabulary for individual words and often included repetition of points such as ‘*readers scan internet articles*’ and ‘*repeat ideas*’. A feature of the weakest responses was inclusion of material not relevant to the focus of the question, such as comments about ‘*a mental flow*’ of writing. These answers had often adopted a cut-and-paste approach, copying sections from the original and/or were almost entirely reliant on the language of the text further diluting evidence of understanding.

Candidates needed to pay particular attention to the wording of the passage to demonstrate understanding of negatively phrased points. There was a tendency to use these incorrectly in the summary to offer advice such as ‘*do not repeat ideas*’ and ‘*do not use a topic sentence*’. Where candidates had not engaged fully with the task and/or attempted a more mechanical approach paraphrasing the material, repetitions were common, such as ‘*readers (only) scan internet articles*’ and ‘*readers only read 20 per cent of a text*’, not noticing that these points were repeated in the original. Some candidates’ points lacked precision – for example, stating that the ‘*first paragraph is important*’ rather than identifying the need to ‘*outline all the points in the first paragraph*’. Reliance on the words of the passage was self-limiting and often suggested misreading – for example, where incomplete or incorrect copying changed the meaning of an idea.

Some candidates relied on recycling phrases from the original, even though there were straightforward alternatives. Commonly lifted examples included: *'adverts, pop-ups and zany animations'*, *'a too tight and a too loose line height'*, *'will receive the most attention'*, and *'visible a good distance'*. Whilst it is not a requirement that every word is altered – more technical terms or names for example are unlikely to have suitably precise synonyms, and words such as *'subheadings'* and *'paragraphs'* did not need to be replaced or explained – candidates recasting information in their own voice were best able to demonstrate understanding. Weaker responses tended to copy chunks from the passage, with little realisation that they had to use their own words where appropriate. Excess material, including unnecessary discussion, extra advice and comment, featured in a number of less successful responses which appeared to have misunderstood the purpose for the response. These answers attempted to extend points to try to offer a developed persuasive or instructional text, rather than offer a focused and concise selective summary based on the text alone. Significantly exceeding the word count was common in weaker responses; this lack of concision was self-penalising.

Reading back through their answer afterwards to make sure that it would both make sense to a reader who had not read the original passage and summarised the essential information that reader would need to know in relation to advice for online writing would have helped a number of candidates target higher marks. The best answers had carefully considered both the content and organisation of their answer, writing in clear, fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using their own words as far as possible. They gave a factual objective summary, demonstrating close reading by grouping relevant ideas, and avoided writing introductory statements and making elaborate comments.

### **Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- read the question carefully to identify the focus of the selective summary task – underline key words
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potentially relevant content points
- you can use spare pages in your answer booklet to plan your ideas ahead of writing your response – draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- identify and discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the focus of the question
- be careful to give only information from the passage that answers the question
- check you understand each idea you use and aim to explain it in your own words
- carefully organise and logically sequence your ideas for your reader, avoiding repetition of similar points
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment on the content of the passage
- pay attention to the maximum guidance for length.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/22  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- avoided copying and/or lifting from either text
- focused on the ideas and details in each passage rather than inventing untethered material
- used their own words appropriately and precisely when explaining, using and interpreting ideas
- considered carefully the particular evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show for each of the three tasks
- addressed tasks in the order set, paying attention to the guidance and instructions for each
- returned to the text when necessary to check understanding of an idea or important detail
- planned the ideas they would use and the route through their answer before writing
- gave equal attention to all aspects of each question
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose.

## General comments

Candidates' responses for the most part indicated familiarity with the format of the paper and some understanding of the general demands of the three tasks. There were relatively few instances where a task had not been attempted, though on occasion responses to questions were incomplete with answers self-limiting as a result. Examiners noted that a small number of candidates had attempted to answer the tasks out of order and had found time management more difficult as a result.

Candidates appeared to find both texts equally accessible though occasionally, achievement was limited by a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task – for example, by writing from the wrong perspective in **Question 1**, explaining fewer than eight choices in **Question 2** or writing far more than the maximum of 250 words advised for **Question 3**. Whilst answers across the cohort covered the full range of marks for each question, opportunities to target higher bands were often missed where candidates offered only explicit and/or more generalised points, misread or over-looked details and/or dealt unevenly with each part of the task in hand. Better responses indicated an awareness of the need to use, rather than simply repeat or copy, material from the text in their answer. The most successful responses paid attention to the specific focus of each task and were able to modify relevant material from the texts skilfully, adapting and using it to demonstrate understanding. Less successful responses were often over-reliant on the wording and/or sequence of the text(s) providing less convincing evidence of skills and understanding as a result. Centres are reminded that basic paraphrasing, lifting and/or copying of the text should be avoided.

Successful answers were able to interpret and use details from Passage A to demonstrate accurate reading in **Question 1**, offer full explanations of meaning and effect in relation to appropriate selections from both of the paragraphs specified in **Question 2** and show understanding of carefully identified, relevant ideas from Passage B to address both aspects of the focus of the task in **Question 3**.

**Question 1** responses for the most part had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task. Most candidates had remembered to sign off their letter as Willie, though in the body of their response a number of potentially stronger answers lapsed back into the voice of the original tourist narrator, missing opportunities for development as a result. In some responses, misreading of key details was a limiting feature. Many candidates were able to respond appropriately to the passage, with the best adopting Willie's perspective convincingly and considering the clues to Adam's attitude and approach carefully. Responses across the cohort covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with mid-range responses often missing opportunities as a consequence of adopting a more mechanical treatment of the text and leaning heavily on the structure of the original passage. Less successful responses either included only brief reference to the passage and/or repeated sections from the text with minimal modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text in order to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

For **Question 2** candidates need to consider appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two specified paragraphs and should offer comments in relation to these choices. To aim for higher bands, candidates should explore and explain in some detail the precise meanings in context and effects of the examples of interesting or powerful language use they have identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose. Most were able to suggest potentially useful examples for analysis in each half of the task, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently clear or careful in the examination of their choices. In **part (b)** particularly, a number repeated the language of the choices in their explanations, diluting evidence of understanding as a result.

In **Question 3** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas and some understanding of the requirements of the task. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea and/or inclusion of material not relevant to the focus of the question meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks. A few candidates dealt with only one aspect of the question, limiting the range of ideas they could include. Where responses were most successful, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal/no rewording or reorganisation of the original. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and/or sentences from the text. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task.

Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, however 20 per cent of the marks available are for Writing – divided equally between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and reviewing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression. Candidates should be aware that unclear style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit and correct responses is advisable.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

**You are Willie, the trainee Inuit guide. After the Arctic cruise is over, you write a letter to your girlfriend, Eska.**

#### **Write the letter.**

**In your letter, you should explain:**

- **where you took the tourists and what activities were organised for them**
- **what you think the tourists expected and how far you think they were satisfied**
- **your thoughts and feelings about Adam as a tour guide.**

**Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.**

**Begin your letter: 'Dear Eska, We have just come back from another tourist cruise around the Arctic ...'**

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the text and task; many offered convincing responses, engaging with both task and text to develop lively responses. Candidates commented on the events of the narrative to make explicit for their imagined reader, Eska, some of those underlying ideas and attitudes only hinted at in the passage. Where content had been planned in advance, and the route through their answer considered beforehand, candidates were often able to include a good range of relevant ideas – both explicit and implicit – over all three bullets. Where responses relied on just tracking through the text, replaying the passage, answers were less focused and often simply repeated details of the journey without offering any interpretation from Willie's perspective. The least successful responses copied sections of text with minimal modification and/or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading of key details and information.

The most convincing responses to **Question 1** indicated that candidates had revisited the passage to examine carefully the details of Adam's actions and behaviour and make judgements based on the evidence in the text about how Willie might view him. Many candidates had spotted the '*broad wink*' that prompted Willie's '*apparently uncontrollable giggles*' and recognised that it suggested some kind of joke between Willie and Adam at the expense of the tourists, though fewer then returned to the text in the light of that understanding to establish that Adam's '*intrepid polar bear monitor*' was an elaborate act. Where candidates had read less closely and not considered how the tour guides' perspectives might differ from those of the tourist narrator, they sometimes struggled to offer relevant development as a consequence.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to include in their letter explanation of where the tourists were taken and what activities were organised for them. Bullets two and three guided candidates to include Willie's thoughts in relation to the tourists' expectations and Adam as a tour guide. Whilst some successful answers relied on the order of the bullets to help structure their answer, stronger answers had often spotted and exploited the potential offered by considering all three aspects throughout their response. They developed and linked their ideas – for example, noting that Adam had organised for tourists to view an amazing array of wildlife but recognised that all the tourists wanted to see was polar bears and had created drama around that. The best answers often let Eska in on the joke from the start – explaining that she too would have found it amusing how easily the tourists were fooled by Adam's act during the land expedition and might be equally frustrated at the tourists' stereotypical expectations of their lives. Answers demonstrating evidence of thorough reading often dealt with the implications of the '*sharp look*', with Willie for example, admitting to Eska that he had got into trouble by nearly giving the game away with his reactions.

Where candidates had dealt with each bullet separately, ideas related to the journey and organised activities were often only hinted at through passing detail and opportunities for development were not taken. For example, the views of awe-inspiring scenery were just touched on in some responses through casual reference to sailing past the '*dark mountains of Frobisher bay*' as candidates replayed the text. Answers that attempted to paraphrase the passage in response to bullet one quickly became repetitive and/or paid limited attention to bullets two and three as a result. Where candidates had identified key aspects of the itinerary from the tourist's narrative and gone on to interpret and support those with useful detail from the passage, they were best able to extend and develop ideas to offer an appropriate voice for Willie's thoughts and a balanced response covering all three bullets. Errors regarding the local food offering – including the suggestion that tourists were invited to eat walrus – and suggestions that activities included tourists paddling canoes (or watching a man paddling) through Frobisher Bay indicated that more careful reading was required. Less successful responses that suggested that saunas, penguin spotting trips and swimming pools had been provided for the tourists were operating outside of the text. Candidates need to remember that any development offered has to be rooted in the facts and details of passage to be creditworthy as evidence of their reading skills and understanding.

In relation to the second bullet, almost all answers recognised that the tourists had expected a very different boat and/or cruise to the one with which they were presented. Better answers teased out the detail of their expectations and surprise. Some candidates who were reading closely considered and offered relevant interpretation for more subtle ideas – for example, why only the guides might have looked unconcerned as the ship '*ploughed through the ice floes*' and '*sliced through*' an iceberg. Some linked this to the sturdy nature of the ship and mocked guests' expectations of an exotic cruise liner when a far more serviceable and reliable vessel was required. Others suggested that what tourists might have regarded a dangerous collision with an iceberg was nothing remarkable to the local guides and/or a deliberate stunt on their part designed to spook their guests and/or create a sense of adventure and excite the guests. A few answers interpreted the tourists as keen to learn – citing the evidence of their questioning – others regarded their response to Adam's story as further evidence of their gullibility and/or stereotypical expectations of Arctic life. More successful answers had often noted the tourists' surprise at Willie's mode of transport and developed the idea by offering his reaction to their limited view of Inuit life – often linking into explanations of Adam's exasperation and/or their choice to eat separately and consume different foodstuffs to those they offered the

tourists. In less well focused responses, enthusiastic descriptions of tourists riding on sleds pulled by huskies, fighting with polar bears and sailing their own boats by day were indicators of significant misreading. Meanwhile, in other potentially stronger responses insufficient consideration of key hints and details meant opportunities were missed to make connections and offer well related, sustained development. Closer reading allowed those candidates who noted that tourists wanted and expected to see polar bears, but were (only) treated to a glimpse early on plus a lucky strike of one swimming past after a whole two days of searching, were often able then to decide on the likelihood of there being any real bear '*lurking*' nearby during their land expedition.

In dealing with ideas related to bullet three most answers were able to include details such as Adam taking a long time to pick out the route, the rifle strapped to his back and his constant checking from left to right. Where answers had simply lifted these and other details from the text without considering what they might suggest, understanding evidenced was often general at best. As with bullets one and two, the weakest answers when attempting to deal with bullet three relied on copying part or whole sentences word-for-word from the text and in doing so were unlikely to evidence more than limited evidence of understanding. Answers copied from the text often also included suggestions of misreading, such as asserting that Adam carried '*an intrepid polar bear monitor*'. More secure answers were able to suggest that Adam appeared to be a brave, knowledgeable and/or efficient guide, with the best going on to suggest just how much of this was an act designed by a competent and convincing business owner to meet tourists' expectations.

In creating a voice for trainee guide Willie, stronger responses had often picked up on the suggestion from his sharing of the photos that he might miss Eska and/or his life in Nunavut and took the opportunity to develop a number of ideas further from this angle. For example, they suggested what she would enjoy and/or find amusing should she be able to accompany him on his next trip, or described the photos/videos he had on his phone to show her once he was back of variously scared, amazed or hoodwinked tourists and Adam's theatrical performance as the intrepid polar bear monitor. A few strayed too far into speculation about unwell relatives and past/future trips abroad, though passing reference to domestic arrangements – such as '*remember to clean the car*' – along with some touching valedictions, often helped to create a sense of engagement with the character and form of the response. On occasion, less effective writing contained some awkward expression, often as a result of insecure vocabulary choices and/or a failure to read back to check for the sense of what they had written. In the weakest answers, lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of whole sections of text not uncommon. This affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills. Meanwhile, answers at the top end were often presented in a lively and relaxed, conversational style with own words used to good effect as Willie reflected on the voyage and shared his thoughts.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 1:**

- remember that the response to reading task is asking you to adopt a different perspective to that of the text – for example, by writing from the point of view of a character other than the narrator
- keep the audience and purpose for your response in mind throughout your answer
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- read the whole text carefully, more than once, and reconsider any points that you are unsure of
- do not invent information and details beyond the scope of the passage; use the clues and evidence in the text to make judgements about characters and situations
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points: the bullet points are designed to help you to identify a wide range of relevant ideas in the text
- plan a route through your answer beforehand – you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and/or link ideas from each
- express ideas from the text which are relevant to your answer using your own words; do not copy from the passage
- try to extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include rather than simply repeat details – for example, by explaining or commenting from the point of view of the character you are writing as
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- do not waste time by counting the exact number of words in your answer; the number of words suggested by the question is a guide to help you plan your time, not a limit.



## Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the sightings in Ungava Bay in paragraph 2, beginning 'The adventure ...'  
(b) Adam and his actions in paragraph 3, beginning 'We did most of our sailing ...'

Select **four** powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase is used effectively in the context.

Responses in **Question 2** needed to have identified a range of relevant examples of language use for discussion in each half of the task, paying attention to the particular focus of each part of the question. Strong answers offered clear analysis of relevant selections in both parts, often beginning with explanations of meaning and moving on to consider effect, and were able to demonstrate understanding of how the writer was using language in each case. Where candidates considered all of the key words in longer choices they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of weaker answers which offered only partial explanation of the phrase as a whole or which selected incomplete choices and then attempted to explain words they had not included. The strongest responses considered words within choices individually, as well as suggesting how they worked within the phrase and in the context of the description as a whole. Rather than selecting the first four choices in each half they came across or the most 'obvious' literary devices, successful answers often set out to identify the relevant selections that they felt best able to explain.

In **part (b)**, some less focused answers attempted to discuss choices that were not related to Adam and his actions, such as '*uncontrollable giggles*' or '*opportunity to stretch our legs*', and missed opportunities to target higher bands as a result. In **part (a)**, some answers selected only part of a longer image, limiting the evidence of understanding offered. For example, choosing to explain '*eerie ghost ship*' led some candidates to discuss an actual abandoned ship appearing ahead of the Russian ship, failing to notice that the image referred to the iceberg. Misreading was also evident in relation to other choices such as '*loomed closer*' and '*black stormy clouds*', which were taken to be references to the yellow-white polar bear and the actual weather conditions at the time respectively. Careful reading might also have helped candidates avoid errors such as attempting to explain the use of '*bellowing*' rather than '*billowing*' and '*slumbering*' rather than '*lumbering*'.

Repetition of the vocabulary of the text in the explanations offered was common in less successful answers, whilst more successful responses were able to offer explanations of precise meaning in their own words which then lead them on to consider effect. Some better answers for example managed to avoid replaying the variations of '*protective*', '*alert*' and '*heavily*' that were a feature of many partially effective responses, and demonstrated understanding of the choices made by the writer by consideration of synonyms, associations and through effective visualisation of images.

Where the meaning of words had been considered carefully in context, candidates were often able to go on to suggest something of the effect and better answers ensured that they had considered all key words within choices. For example, in **part (b)**, having considered the precise meaning in context of choices such as '*as regularly as a pendulum*' and '*intrepid polar bear monitor*' many candidates went on to suggest something mechanical and predetermined about Adam's approach, with some suggesting the ludicrous picture created through images of Adam theatrically cupping his ear to hear the '*creature*' and controlling the tourists with a mere '*flick*' of the hand. Often answers had picked up on the associations of such words as '*command*' and '*immediate*' and were able to offer understanding of how these created a sense of danger, though fewer went on to consider layers of meaning and effect – for example, to explore whether the sense of threat was real or imagined.

Meanwhile, opportunities to target higher marks were sometimes missed where meaning in context was not carefully considered or explained – for example, suggestions that '*stealthily pad round us*' meant that Adam was cushioning the tourists (from the cold) or providing with layers of protection (in case they fell over) were not accurate and could not be credited. Similarly, candidates are reminded of the need to ensure that their explanations can be clearly understood in **Question 2**. Whilst the task is not assessing writing, encouraging learners to explore choices fully and operate at the very edges of their vocabulary, it is nevertheless important that they read back their explanation to check that what they have written is what they mean. For example, suggesting that '*glimpse means to see something shortly*' is not the same as saying that to glimpse means to see something for a short while.

Candidates are reminded it is the quality of their analysis which attracts marks. Answers which simply list literary devices used and/or copy from each paragraph without careful consideration of the examples to be discussed are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks in a language question. A number of weaker answers relied on simply spotting literary devices and as a result struggled to interpret meaning or effect. For example, whilst some candidates who selected it were able to offer credible and varied interpretations of the effect created by the description of the iceberg having '*twisted and turned*', others struggled to comment as a consequence of having simply identified the choice as '*an example of alliteration*'. Taking time to select from the full range of potential choices those about which they felt most able to comment, rather than simply trying to spot literary devices, would have helped a number of candidates who offered only thin or inappropriate comment.

Many candidates were able to provide satisfactory evidence of skills and understanding in either one part of the task or both and might have achieved higher marks by extending their explanations to consider how or why a particular synonym had been selected in favour of another to demonstrate that they understood some of the subtleties of how language can work. Where candidates had unpicked choices carefully, they often offered interesting and imaginative explanations – for example, as to why the writer might have chosen '*vast*' to explain the overwhelming numbers of murres filling the air, rather than big or enormous, or how associations and connotations of '*hulking*' suggested a solid muscular build indicating physical power rather than simply meaning huge or large. Answers sometimes prejudiced the evidence of understanding they were able to demonstrate in relation to meaning and effect by attempting to discuss selections outside of the context of the text – for example, some answers tried to explain '*lumbering*' as chopping wood – or through inaccurate copying – for example, referencing a sleepy bear '*slumbering heavily*'. Better answers that focused on exploring and explaining each of their choices carefully and in detail, were able to offer some high quality analysis in each half of the question.

Selections in **Question 2** need to be clear and deliberate, helping to focus the analysis which follows. Long quotations with only the first and last words identified are less likely to be useful and result in very thin general comments at best. Opportunities were missed in some answers, such as where a chosen phrase contained more than one word of interest and the answer moved on too quickly, offering a more general explanation of the phrase as a whole and/or only considering one of the words it contained. For example, a number of answers chose '*the eerie ghost ship of an iceberg appeared*' but missed the chance to consider the meaning or effect of '*appeared*' or even '*eerie*', limiting their suggestions to generalised comments regarding the scary nature of being haunted by ghosts. Similarly, some candidates attempted to guess at the meanings of words they did not understand rather than select those where their understanding of meaning might be more secure – '*disdain*', '*painstakingly*' and '*billowing*' were often selected by candidates who then struggled to explain them, overlooking arguably more accessible alternatives such as '*blinding ice*' and '*revealed*' which might have proved more profitable. Likewise, examiners noted that some candidates who wrote at some length in **Question 2**, offering relevant suggestions in **part (b)** such as that Adam's movements variously appeared to be robotic, deliberately exaggerated and/or comedic, had completely overlooked that aspect in their **Question 1** answer and might have usefully returned to their letter to correct their mistake.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- once you think you have identified potentially relevant choices to answer **part (a)** and **part (b)**, select your strongest four from each paragraph to explore and explain
- make sure your choices are precise and accurate – do not copy out lines of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice you wish to discuss
- avoid empty comments such as comments that '*the writer shows us what it is like to be there*' – unless you say how and in what way your chosen example does this you are not showing understanding
- consider each of the key words within your identified choice separately as well as how they work together
- if you are unsure of effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) you have identified
- try to explore and explain the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the effect the writer might have wanted to create
- allow time to edit your answer – for example, to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

### Question 3

**What factors influenced traditional lives of the Inuit communities and how has life in Inuit communities changed since the 1940s, according to Passage B?**

**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.**

**Your summary should not be more than 250 words.**

Candidates who addressed the selective summary task successfully often showed evidence of having planned the content and organisation of their answer before writing their response. There were some very effective, well-crafted responses that demonstrated concision and accurate reading of the passage and question. Some candidates chose to deal with each part of the task in turn, others dealt with both at the same time, highlighting each factor in turn and linking where relevant to an aspect of how things had changed. Both approaches worked well in carefully planned and executed answers. The majority of candidates showed at least some awareness of the demands of the task and carefully avoided inclusion of more obviously redundant material such as the explanations about language and locations in paragraph one. Better answers avoided excess through identifying only those points that were specifically relevant to the dual focus of the question (the factors that had influenced the traditional lives of Inuit and how life has changed). They distinguished between the facts of traditional life offered in the passage (such as Inuit having sleds and various types of boats) and the influencing factors (for example, the need to transport goods between summer and winter homes). Candidates who had spent time reviewing their initial selection of ideas were best placed to recognise similar examples of the same idea and were often able to group those examples usefully together under one umbrella point, avoiding repetition of ideas or inclusion of unnecessary detail.

Successful answers did not rely on the structure or language of Passage B to communicate ideas. Less effective responses often relied on trying to offer a précis of the whole text and/or tried to work through the passage chronologically, indiscriminately recording any facet of Inuit life, old or new. In these answers excess material was commonplace – including descriptions of tent-like huts, sleds pulled by strong dogs and thick coats with big hoods, for instance, as well as repeated reference to ‘permanent settlements’ and the invention of aeroplanes. In low to mid-range answers, incomplete awareness or understanding of why they might want to avoid lifting meant that some candidates tended to concentrate on substituting words and/or altering word order without careful selection of the central idea – diluting evidence of understanding of both task and text. Candidates need to be aware that simply moving word order around within a sentence or replacing just one word is not a short cut to providing secure evidence of their reading skills and understanding and is likely to result in transcription errors that betray weaknesses in their comprehension – for example, through such errors as suggestions that ‘*sheds were pulled by huskies*’ or that ‘*transpired snow*’ was good for building with. Candidates need to work to show understanding of ideas rather than simply track the passage making minimal changes and/or slotting in substituted words.

As with **Question 1**, the weakest answers copied sections from the original text with little modification and/or were almost entirely reliant on the language of the text. Stronger answers were able to recast information, organise it helpfully, and use their own vocabulary where feasible without changing or blurring the original idea. Rather than seeking to ‘translate’ a key section of the whole text (leading to overlong answers) the best answers identified the central point in hand and made it clearly and succinctly in their own words. They avoided excess such as unhelpful lists of the creatures comprising traditional dietary options and the means by which these former ‘*staples of [the Inuit] diet*’ were captured by pinpointing the factor influencing such a meat-based diet according to the text – that growing their own plant-based food wasn’t practical or possible in the challenging conditions of tundra.

Where candidates had paid careful attention to the task as set, they aimed for concise and well organised answers, using their own vocabulary where practicable and appropriate to help clarify meaning for their reader. Candidates producing the most effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a wide range of relevant ideas, communicating them in their own words and skilfully selecting and organising/linking points where helpful to offer an overview. Successful answers read closely and carefully, avoiding the misreading of details evident in less secure answers – for example, that traditional life had been influenced by climate change rather than the challenges of the ‘*harsh climate*’ or that huskies were killed for their fur. Some potentially stronger answers offered comment and opinion adding further ideas not drawn from the text and losing sight of the task.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- re-read the passage after reading the task instructions, in order to identify potential relevant ideas given the focus of the question
- you can use spare pages in your answer booklet to plan your ideas ahead of writing your response – draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- identify and discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the focus of the question
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to check they are distinct and complete – for example, whether there are repeated ideas which could be combined or ideas which need further explanation
- return to any idea you are unsure of to check that you understand it before you try to use it
- organise and sequence your ideas helpfully for your reader; do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the passage
- aim to explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the passage would understand
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- avoid repetition of points
- though it is not necessary to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write ‘no more than 250 words’ as a reminder in the selective summary of the need for concision.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/23  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- avoided copying and/or lifting from either text
- focused on the ideas and details in each passage rather than inventing new material
- used their own words appropriately and precisely when explaining, using and interpreting ideas
- considered carefully the particular evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show for each of the three tasks
- addressed tasks in the order set, paying attention to the guidance and instructions for each
- returned to the text when necessary to check understanding of an idea or important detail
- planned the ideas they would use and the route through their answer before writing
- gave equal attention to all aspects of each question
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose.

## General comments

The majority of candidates were aware of the general requirements of each question and were able to demonstrate, at varying levels, the different skills required for each task. The most successful responses displayed a sound level of understanding of both passages and the ability to modify the material for the purposes of each task. They wrote in an appropriate style for each task and were able to draw on a range of effective vocabulary. Less secure responses were often reliant on the wording and structure of the texts and were not always focused on the details or instructions of the question. Most candidates attempted all parts of the tasks and there were very few unfinished or incomplete responses.

The majority of **Question 1** responses demonstrated at least some awareness of the need to use ideas from Passage A to write an article offering the local journalist's observations and thoughts in relation to all three bullets. Mid-range responses often missed opportunities to target higher marks by replaying the material from the passage in a mechanical or straightforward way. Less effective responses were not well focused and contained a narrow range of ideas, often repeating the words of the passage with little modification. The most successful responses were informative and persuasive, containing a good range of developed ideas about the region and activities of mountain biking and about Robert's first experiences of the sport.

For **Question 2** most candidates had selected a sufficient number of examples to explain from both specified paragraphs and only a small number selected inappropriate choices or addressed only one half of the question. The best responses offered focused and clear explanations of meanings, effects and images, demonstrating a clear understanding of the writer's use of specific words and phrases. Mid-range responses were less precise, offering more general comments in relation to incomplete or over-long choices. Less good responses tended to repeat the words of the original as they attempted to explain, and were often unhelpfully concerned with simply identifying literary devices rather than discussing their use or effectiveness.

Strong responses to **Question 3** displayed a good or reasonable understanding of the ideas in Passage B. The best responses included a wide range of relevant ideas that were effectively organised and expressed clearly and succinctly in the candidate's own words as far as possible. Mid-range responses were not always well organised or focused and included excess material and sometimes repeated ideas. The least successful responses did not select relevant ideas and/or relied on copying of phrases or sections from the text indicating an insecure understanding of both the passage and the task.

Whilst Paper 2 is primarily a test of reading it is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing and plan their answers to avoid repetition between sections, awkward expression, and errors that impede communication. Candidates should be aware that unclear style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to check and edit their responses.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

**You are one of the local press team. You are writing an article about tourism and mountain biking in the region, including the arrival of the well-known long-distance cyclist, Robert Costello.**

#### **Write the article.**

**In your article you should explain:**

- **what the region has to offer tourists**
- **what the region's mountain biking entails**
- **what Robert was worried about initially and how he overcame his worries.**

**Begin your article: 'Our region offers so much to keep visitors happy ...'**

Many responses displayed an engagement with Passage A and were written in an appropriate journalistic style, sometimes adopting a friendly chatty voice that might appeal to young potential visitors. Many candidates were able to modify Robert's descriptions of the area and his personal thoughts about his experiences and write an informative, detailed, and often persuasive article about the region and the sport of mountain biking.

For the first bullet point, successful articles included a good range of relevant ideas and references were made to the fine dining restaurants, the comfort of the chalets and skiing activities that took place in the winter. In mid-range responses, these ideas were not always modified or developed effectively, and were often only touched on in passing through recounting of details in the narrative rather than re-presented as an overview of what the area had to offer both tourists and participants in the carnival. There were opportunities to comment that the restaurants provided the healthy food needed to renew the energy of bikers who had engaged in strenuous activities and to provide them with fuel for the day ahead. Reference to the shared stories and rock music in the panelled hall during the evenings was often not identified as an opportunity for enthusiasts to socialise and enjoy a feeling of camaraderie with like-minded people.

Not all responses distinguished between the appeal of the area for spectators who could enjoy watching an entertaining and exciting sport and the attraction for participants who had the opportunity to compete against each other for prizes and display their skills. Many responses referred to the beauty of the landscape with the snow-capped mountains and black conifers but few took the opportunity to comment on the views in the evening when a walk through the paths provided picturesque views and a relaxing contrast to the daytime activities. In some responses the details were used mechanically and often included phrases copied from the passage, for example, '*slept like a baby*', '*healthy fine dining*' and '*indifferent rock music*'. Other less focused responses invented attractions of the resort not rooted in the text – for example, citing beaches, swimming pools and wide screen televisions in the hotel rooms. Better responses interpreted and developed details offered in the passage to illustrate why the region would appeal to a wide range of people.

When addressing the second bullet point many candidates included enthusiastic descriptions of the sport of mountain biking that were taken from various parts of the passage and references were made to the manic speeds, twists and turns, jumps, steep walls and the drop. Most commented on the thrills, excitement and the adrenaline rush enjoyed by the bikers. Likewise, most noted the choice of runs available for different abilities, with examples taken from the passage, and referred to details such as the network of chairlifts and

80 kilometres of track. Although a good amount of detail was often included, it was not always focused on the opportunities available for those taking part. It was not always made clear that the region was specifically designed through its infrastructure to make the sport ideal for bikers who wanted to experience downhill racing, nor what the sport actually entailed. Better responses explained that the chairlifts allowed participants to transport their heavy bikes to the summit before beginning their goal, the downhill descent, and that some tracks were man-made to specifically provide different challenges and obstacles for different abilities. Strong responses were informative, and often persuasive, in offering an overview of the experience of mountain biking in the region.

The third bullet directed candidates to interpret and include in their article key aspects of Robert's experiences as a novice downhill cyclist. Most identified and commented on his anxieties at trying something so alien to him and recognised his lack of downhill experience. Many also referred to his fear of painful injuries and the support he received from Flora. There was some effective development of these points in stronger answers and comments were made that he had had to change his posture and learn a new set of skills on a much heavier bike, and that his confidence had improved with Flora's patient approach to training/thanks to the protective equipment that was provided for him. There was some misunderstanding of his previous experiences with some reference to the fire roads, gravel paths, root-strewn forest tracks and obstacles as new challenges for him. Closer reading allowed more successful responses to identify that Robert was in fact used to dealing with these during his usual flat-ground cycling and that it was the unusually steep slopes, walls and jumps involved in downhill racing that worried him.

A few responses commented usefully on his fear of humiliation and embarrassment at failing, as a well-known cyclist, to master the steep descents. Where candidates had followed the order of the bullets, this third section of their answer often contained a range of details and quotations from 'an interview with Robert'. They sometimes repeated the words of the passage – for example, '*plastic armour*' and '*sofa-like 140 mm of suspension both at front and rear*' and Flora's cries of '*Go! Go! Go! Robert.*' While it is sometimes a feature of a news article to use quotation from interviews and some answers were able to recast the information in a lively and convincing style, other responses relied too heavily on the original wording and diluted evidence of understanding as a result. Better responses included and reworked Robert's comments on the sport at the end of the passage with some success. Good responses did more than simply recount Robert's experiences – some used Robert's visit as a focus for the angle of their article, weaving in ideas relevant to the third bullet from the start of their article, presenting his visit as evidence of the area's attractions.

The strongest responses demonstrated a clear sense of audience and were written in a fluent and appropriate style using a range of interesting vocabulary. Less effective responses relied on the wording of the passages and contained copied sections which did not help to display a secure understanding of ideas and often resulted in awkward expression and/or a lack of clarity.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 1:**

- remember that the response to reading task is asking you to adopt a different perspective to that of the text: for example, by writing from the point of view of a character other than the narrator
- keep the audience and purpose for your response in mind throughout your answer
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- read the whole text carefully, more than once, and check back on any points that you are unsure of
- do not invent information and details beyond the scope of the passage; use the clues and evidence in the text to make your judgements
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points: the bullet points are designed to help you to identify a wide range of relevant ideas in the text
- plan a route through your answer beforehand: you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and/or link ideas from each
- express ideas from the text which are relevant to your answer using your own words; do not copy from the passage
- try to extend and develop some of the ideas you include rather than simply repeat details: for example, by commenting on those ideas from the perspective of the persona you are adopting for the task
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- do not waste time by counting the exact number of words in your answer; the number of words suggested by the question is a guide to help you plan your time, not a limit.

## Question 2

### Re-read the descriptions of

- (a) the mountain bikers, their equipment and their activities in paragraph 2, beginning ‘Downhill mountain biking ...’
- (b) the sites in the region in paragraph 5, beginning, ‘Basking in a mild ...’

Select **four** powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase is used effectively in the context.

Most candidates selected a sufficient number of relevant choices from both paragraphs to allow opportunity to demonstrate understanding in their explanations, though many missed opportunities to target higher bands by offering careful and precise comments, exploring their choices. Some answers did not include complete or appropriate choices, limiting their explanations. Others attempted to focus on the meanings of individual words without considering the intended effects in context and/or how they operated within groups of key words. Not all responses gave equal focus to both parts of the task and a few did not attempt **part (b)** which restricted evidence of understanding in the response.

In **part (a)** successful responses engaged with the language used to describe the excitement of mountain biking, and its specialised equipment and activities. Many focused on the word ‘*succumb*’ and were able to explain that the bikers were prepared to surrender and let themselves go into the ‘*crazy*’ drop. Not all were able to explain the use of the word ‘*dance*’, though most understood that allowing themselves to fall was a kind of madness and that their movements could be seen to lack co-ordination and/or took on an artistry of their own. Weaker responses tended to repeat the words ‘*crazy*’ and ‘*manic*’ and some offered explanations of insanity and madness as a general overview of the paragraph without analysing how specific words and phrases created the impression of loss of control and fast speeds. Several candidates clearly explained the effects of ‘*embroidered tales*’ with references to carefully woven tapestries that were embellished with details in order to impress an audience, and may have understood that ‘*network*’ was a complex and coordinated system of chair lifts. The best responses selected complete choices and focused on the meanings of significant and interesting words before considering the effects of phrases and groups of words.

Answers to **part (b)** were often less precise with long choices and vague comments that were not focused on the analysis of individual words but instead offered a generalised overview at best. Some attempted to explore examples ‘*slept like a baby*’ and ‘*stilled by wonder*’ that were not focused on the sights and views and so not relevant to the task. When considering the phrase ‘*bathed in the gentle violet hues of dusk*’ many responses focused usefully on the word ‘*bathed*’ and explained that Robert felt surrounded and enveloped by the muted colours of sunset that were comforting and relaxing. Some clearly explained that ‘*softer presence*’ indicated that the surroundings were less harsh and threatening than the daytime views and scenes of chaos. There were some clear explanations of the words ‘*crept noiselessly*’ that explored the image of trees moving stealthily and silently in an almost ominous and threatening way. Less effective responses gave meanings of words without considering the images they suggested to the reader. For example, ‘*mild mockery*’ was explained as making fun of someone without commenting on the humour suggested by the comparison of the quiet trees climbing the mountain to the noisy chair-lift users. Several grouped the words ‘*peeped*’, ‘*modest affirmation*’ and ‘*majestic beauty*’ together and gave some meanings of individual words without considering their effects. Some literary devices were simply without explanation or exploration of their specific effectiveness in this context. The weakest responses often repeated the language of the text in attempts to explain meaning or effect. The best responses selected precise and relevant examples with clear explanations of the key words and equal focus on both parts of the task.

### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- once you think you have identified potentially relevant choices to answer **part (a)** and **part (b)**, select your strongest four from each paragraph to explore and explain
- make sure your choices are precise and accurate; do not copy out lines of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice you wish to discuss
- avoid ‘empty’ comments such as comments unless you say how and in what way your chosen example does this you are not showing understanding
- consider how the words you have chosen fit together with those around them; check that your explanations make sense in context



- if you are unsure of effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) you have identified
- try to explore and explain the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the effect the writer might have wanted to create
- allow time to edit your answer: for example, to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

### Question 3

**How would a company operating balloon trips ensure that their trips were enjoyable and accessible to all their passengers, according to Passage B.**

**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.**

**Your summary should not be more than 250 words.**

The majority of responses has attempted to answer in the correct form and presented their selective summary of information either from the standpoint of the company in the passage or as advice to other companies on how to maximise enjoyment and accessibility based on this company's experience. Most candidates demonstrated an understanding of the details in the passage and many were able to select a reasonable number of relevant ideas. Some less focused responses were written as a letter from Pujita trying to convince her sister that their father would enjoy the trip. This resulted in answers where the information from the passage had not been modified for purpose and were very close to the original wording. They also contained excess material and details specific to the family instead of information relevant to a wide range of customers. The best responses included a wide range of well organised ideas with a clear focus on the task.

Not all responses re-ordered their ideas and grouped similar pieces of information together. For example, there were opportunities to link ideas about maximising enjoyment, such as offering a choice of views and providing birthday cakes and certificates to customers. Information about enhancing the convenience for customers by not having to wait unnecessarily while the balloon is inflated, or waiting for transport after landing, could also have been presented together, resulting in a more cohesive and concise summary. There was little evidence of note taking or planning beforehand and many candidates appeared unwisely to have tried to simply work their way through the passage as they wrote their response. This led to excess material through repetition of ideas – for example, references to attentive staff initially and then further references to the staff attending politely and sensitively to customers.

Some contained unnecessary details and overlong explanations. Many less well focused responses included detailed and irrelevant reference to the warmth and comfort of the basket during the flight and explained reasons why people would not feel cold. The details in the passage regarding tracking, meeting the balloon and taking passengers back to the starting point were often explained at some length instead of summarising the main idea; that passengers would be met immediately on landing and taken back to the starting location. Some responses contained inaccurate information which demonstrated a less than secure understanding – for example, that passengers could choose where they landed. Some offered advice that was not included in the passage – for example, providing music and food throughout the journey or providing wheelchair access. Some included unnecessary introductions or personal views about balloon journeys.

Some responses relied heavily on the wording of the passage, or included large sections of copied material which did not demonstrate a full understanding of the main ideas and often led to summaries that lacked concision. There were opportunities to use alternative words and secure higher marks for writing – for example, substituting the words '*ample*' '*attentive*' and '*tracking*'. The best responses not only replaced some of the words in the passage but consistently modified the material using a range of appropriate vocabulary. The most effective responses displayed a good understanding of the ideas in the passage and wrote informatively, clearly and concisely.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- re-read the passage after reading the task instructions, in order to identify potential relevant ideas given the focus of the question
- you can use spare pages in your answer booklet to plan your ideas ahead of writing your response; draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- identify and discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the focus of the question

- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to check they are distinct and complete: for example, whether there are repeated ideas which could be combined or ideas which need further explanation
- return to any idea you are unsure of to check that you understand it before you try to use it
- organise and sequence your ideas helpfully for your reader; do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the passage
- aim to explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the passage would understand
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- avoid repetition of points
- keep in mind the guidance to write 'no more than 250 words' as a reminder in the selective summary of the need for concision.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/31  
Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for Reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary and use language with precision.

## General Comments

The great majority of responses showed confident awareness of what was expected in both the Directed Writing and Composition sections of the paper. Rubric infringements where more than the required number of questions were attempted were rare, with responses to one question from each of the composition genres very occasionally being seen. On occasions where such infringements did occur, marks were affected by there not being sufficient time allowed to write considered and substantial responses. A very small number of scripts had no response to either **Section 1** or **Section 2**.

At all levels of achievement, clear understanding was shown of the reading material and the task in **Question 1**, and responses often demonstrated strong engagement with the topic, while paying appropriate attention to the style and format of an article. The majority of responses showed very little evidence of simple paraphrase or indiscriminate copying of material in the passage.

Some excellent answers interrogated the views expressed by the writer of the first passage and showed a mature awareness of the commercial nature of the second. Candidates wrote knowledgeably about the enormous influence of social media on the lives of young people and the ubiquity of large-scale charity events. Some effective responses enthusiastically supported the parent's ideas about the more common fundraising events in schools but were still able to develop their views in a suitably evaluative manner. Others recognised the strength of the writer's feelings but disputed her conclusions about the futility of these activities or offered thoughtful reservations. Those responses which offered some challenge to the assertions and attitudes of both passages more readily demonstrated evaluation of the material when they justified their objections.

The best responses combined an assured grasp of the content and attitudes of the passages with an independence of thought reflected in the structure of their writing: rather than a methodical consideration of the points in the same sequence as the originals, they were evaluative of the whole thrust of the parent's article from the outset, selecting and commenting on its details to support their views and sensitively aware of the attitudes of the speaker in the text. The material in the second passage was used alongside it to construct a consistent argument. In Band 4, responses often simply reproduced the points made by the parent with some, often lengthily anecdotal, development, then gave their conclusion in a final paragraph the tone of which was sometimes at variance with what had gone before. Here, there was rarely an awareness shown of the commercial nature of the second passage, or it was not used at all.

While it was proper to give due consideration to the ideas in both passages about fundraising, the question also required the candidate's own views, based on the passages, to be given, and quite frequently responses did not develop a clear stance on the topic, simply reproducing points from both passages. Although even at the lower levels of achievement there was very little completely undeveloped reproduction of the material, many responses made one or two valid points but otherwise showed such limited coverage of the material that examiners could not award marks in Band 4 for Reading. Here, the writing was sometimes of a fluency and accuracy more typical of higher Bands and in these scripts an originality of thought and invention was sometimes demonstrated in **Section 2** compositions that was absent in the handling of the reading passages.

Most responses paid some attention to the audience and style required for an article, but real consideration of the young audience specified in the task was less commonly seen. Responses in the middle range were evaluative in purpose to some extent, using the passage to create and structure arguments with some sense of audience. Some weaker responses, however, struggled to find the appropriate tone and style of address for writing such an article: a few wrote a letter or simply paraphrased the material without specific form.

In **Section 2**, there was usually a clear awareness of the differing requirements of the two genres. In this examination series the narrative options were more popular, and there was writing of a high standard seen across the different types. As always, the best responses were typified by careful structuring, a wide-ranging and precisely employed vocabulary, and a high level of technical accuracy. **Question 2(a)** evoked some excellent descriptive pieces, in which conscious crafting for effect, which did not drift into narrative, was often seen, although some effectively employed a narrative framework for the purposes of cohesion. Responses to **Question 2(b)**, at different levels of achievement, usually avoided narrative and focused on description from the outset. Less effective responses to both questions in the descriptive genre were typically dominated by simple sequencing, the listing of ordinary details, and limited vocabulary. Successful responses to **Question 3(a)** and **Question 3(b)** frequently engaged the reader's interest from the beginning, and also provided a satisfactory and believable resolution to the story. The topic of **Question 3(a)**, '*Under Suspicion*', produced some engaging narratives encompassing a wide range of scenarios, although most chose to write about criminal activities or unjust accusations. Very many responses to **Question 3(b)**, the most popular Composition choice, concerned announcements of pregnancy, marriage or imminent moves to another city or country, or approaching catastrophe. At the lower end of Band 6 and in Band 5, often well-written stories were let down by weak and unconvincing endings. There needs to be more awareness of the distinctive requirements of the genre in this respect. A small number of engaging and promising narratives stopped very abruptly without any meaningful conclusion. Sometimes this appeared to result from supplying too extensive a back-story, leaving insufficient time to develop the plot effectively.

Weaker responses in both **Section 1** and **Section 2** sometimes struggled to find the correct register and tone for their intended audience, and were marred by the frequency of basic errors in punctuation and syntax. Errors of agreement were widespread. The use of commas where full stops or semi-colons were required and uncertain control of tense were evident at varying levels of achievement, as was the inappropriate use of capital letters. There were a considerable number of compositions which were unparaphrased, including in the setting out of dialogue.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### ***Section 1: Directed Writing***

#### **Question 1**

**Write an article** for a magazine for young people in which you consider the issue of fundraising in schools.

In your article, you should:

- evaluate the ideas for fundraising activities in the two passages
- consider how worthwhile the ideas might be for a school and its students.

Base your article on the facts, ideas and opinions in the two passages, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the bullet points.

Begin your article with the headline, 'Charitable Choices'.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

**Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 15 marks for the quality of your writing.**

Marks in the top band were awarded where the views in the passages were subjected to rigorous examination and there was an overview of the issues. Here, there was more than a straightforward listing of the points made by the parent in the first passage, or the activities offered in the second. The style of the response was also appropriate and displayed a high level of accuracy, and points were selected to support views in a cohesive and balanced argument. Where an article format and style were maintained throughout the response and the mode of address was consistently appropriate for the specified audience, the underlying assumptions and implications of the passages were recognised, and explicit assertions and requests were scrutinised and challenged, examiners could award very high marks indeed.

Marks in Band 4 were awarded when reasonable understanding of the issues was shown, albeit while accepting claims or assertions at face value, and some points were subjected to more extended discussion and development. Responses here were typified by often enthusiastic support for the parent's ideas and indiscriminating acceptance of the offers in the second passage.

Less effective responses showed some understanding of the main ideas although demonstrating no clear point of view. Very thin use of the detail and weakness in organising ideas coherently were characteristic at this level.

### **The marks for Reading**

The passages proved accessible at all levels of ability; the best responses were evaluative throughout, commanding the subject from the beginning, and demonstrating the ability to assess objectively the views expressed in the parent's article and the website advertisement and adopt a wider view. Responses awarded marks at the top of the mark range were able to steer a diplomatic course between acknowledging the validity of some of the parent's points and suggesting that her assertion of the futility of many challenges was erroneous:

Responses often acknowledged that the desire for recognition on social media motivated many young people to become involved in charity events but denied that this invalidated their efforts: '*Surely the whole point is to raise money for good causes? What does it matter if we get something out of it? The internet is the greatest advertising medium ever so let's use it!*' This high-level evaluation sometimes included the detection of a carping, unreasonable criticism on the part of the parent of the world of young people whose social landscape had always been that of the internet and social media. At this and lower levels of achievement responses were also able gently to castigate the parent's criticism of schools which publicised their fundraising events for their own purposes: '*A school must educate its students in moral behaviour towards the needy, and prospective parents would want to see those sorts of activities on its website.*' At all levels of ability and expressed with varying levels of effectiveness was the assumption that the creation of a well-educated and rounded individual was the responsibility of the school as well as the parent and charity fundraising was an important part of that. The most effective responses avoided straying too far into

discussing the value of each charity activity in itself, a tendency more often seen in middle-range responses, which sometimes resulted in a loss of focus on the task. In connection with this the 'extreme' activities advertised in the second passage were assessed for their suitability for young students and schools. The better responses did not assume the automatic superiority of such challenges, and were able to detect the self-serving nature of many of these activities: *'These "adrenaline -fuelled stunts" are as much about showing off and improving your own prowess as helping the poor.'* Authoritative and perceptive responses did not always refute the writers' views but developed and evaluated them in a sophisticated manner.

Marks in Band 5 were awarded when there was more than just simple agreement with or reproduction of the proposals in the material in the passages, and some of their implicit meanings were held up for scrutiny. Responses often began by reproducing and agreeing with the parent's views of school fundraising activities, covering the material with reasonable thoroughness, and with some degree of evaluation. The challenges offered in the second passage were usually then compared favourably, often as being more 'worthwhile' and 'meaningful' rather than being more profitable for charities; responses were often rather vague about the process by which these activities resulted in donation to the charities. Evaluation sometimes resided in a single observation which demonstrated understanding of the essential thrust of the first passage: *'We know that our hair will grow again but cutting it off to raise awareness of sufferers does give us a taste of what they go through, and raises money for their cause. What's wrong with that?' or 'Most people throwing buckets of ice water over themselves weren't aware of their hypocrisy, wasting fresh water when they were supposed to be raising awareness of the scarcity of resources.'* Some responses were awarded a mark just in Band 5 for their common-sense approach to events such as the ice-bucket challenge or the chocolate-eating competition: *'If you catch a cold from getting soaked or a stomach upset from stuffing yourself you probably won't be collecting any money for charity.'* Responses awarded a mark of eight typically evaluated a number of points from the passages, or were evaluative throughout in their approach, often signalling this in the opening paragraph. Some partly evaluative responses maintained too narrow a focus on one area of the reading passage, perhaps the dominance of social media or the personal benefits to be gained from training for strenuous challenges, to the detriment of a fully developed response.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 4 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the reading material but without recognition or evaluation of its more implicit meanings or internal contradictions or with less scrutiny of the points made. Here responses often summarised or repeated in a very painstaking manner the various fundraising activities complained of by the parent or offered for sale by the website. Sometimes the main thrust of a response was to offer a range of solutions, which does not constitute evaluation of the ideas in the passages. Elsewhere the response lost focus and rambled into a generalised discussion of the value of charity work or the importance of being a good person. A mark of six could be given where the key points were reproduced with some appropriate development. Responses at this level often uncritically reproduced and supported points in the passage and then offered contradictory views so that no clear stance was discernible. Where there was clear understanding of the main thrust of the article but only a limited selection of points discussed a mark of five was given.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where there was some misunderstanding of the point of either or both passages, although this was quite rare, or a lack of focus on the task, or overlong anecdotes which did not express a clear view on the topic. Some responses struggled to differentiate between fundraising, sponsorship and the raising of awareness. Firmer links with the material and a wider range of points could be awarded a mark of four, but where coverage of the material was very flimsy a mark of three was more appropriate. Only a very few responses were given marks below three, when very little had been written and connection with the text and task was only peripheral. A small number of responses simply copied the material unselectively, thus seriously affecting both Reading and Writing marks for **Question 1**.

### **Marks for writing**

15 marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **Style and audience**

While almost all responses began with at least some recognition of audience, many continued by reiterating, almost verbatim, the points made by the parent, and those in the second passage. Some responses were perceptive and included evaluative discussions of the issues but lost sight of their perceived audience except perhaps in the concluding paragraph. It was not unusual for examiners to award marks for Writing in a Band lower than the response had earned for Reading. Frequently there was limited evidence of a sustained awareness of audience in the style or register of a response or accommodation to young people's concerns or likely attitudes in the approach. Less effective responses sometimes referred explicitly and inappropriately

to the reading passages: *'the writer in the first passage says ...'* - going on to write a paraphrase or comparison of the two passages. The most effective and confident responses assimilated the material and used it to create a focused and often entertaining article appropriate to the audience, showing often sophisticated awareness of the pressures on schools and the concerns of young people in a digital age. Responses given marks in the top Band for Writing demonstrated throughout the authoritative control and fluency required by the Mark Scheme.

Responses given marks at the lower end of Band 6 and in Band 5 were often appropriate in tone and form, but they often followed and reproduced the wording of the passage quite closely. While there was little wholesale copying of clauses or sentences from the passage, paraphrase was often so close that the response had no discernible style of its own and was almost entirely dependent on the vocabulary of the original.

### Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the passages confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall response which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passages but was not dependent on their structure and sequence. At the highest level, the reading passages were incorporated into an authoritative and engaging response.

Responses given Band 6 for writing tended to reflect the priority of points made in the passages but they were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed to meet the demands of the task. Responses opened with a considered address to the young reader and ended with a concluding paragraph which showed a clear sense of purpose and audience: *'There are always websites such as justgiving.com where anonymous donations can be made, but to participate in these other worthwhile activities, communicate, educate and explore all the options with your parents. Happy Fundraising!'* Less effective responses in Band 4 and below sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing in the passages.

Some responses given marks below Band 3 were limited in structure and entirely dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passages, or lacked adequate coverage of the reading material. This often led to some basic reiteration of the first few points but without the re-ordering of them which was needed to give a sense of purpose and audience: conclusions were cursory or omitted. Some responses offered a basic summary of the first passage with little reorganisation.

### Accuracy

Responses in Band 7 combined a fluent and authoritative style, typified by precisely employed, appropriate vocabulary and a wide range of sentence structures, with a very high level of technical accuracy. Responses given a mark of 8 or 9 were often clearly and competently written, but their vocabulary lacked ambition or precision. Errors of sentence separation and a lack of paragraphing often restricted the Writing mark to a Band below that awarded for Reading. Two types of writing typified responses awarded marks in Band 4 and below: the first, more common one lacked evidence of controlled shaping, and there were very frequent basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The inappropriate use of capital letters, either employed randomly or used exclusively was quite widespread. The second type was often characterised by secure spelling and quite ambitious vocabulary but marred by structural faults in sentences and syntax, errors of agreement and tense, and an uncertain use of prepositions. Here, articles were sometimes omitted or 'the' was used rather than 'a' or 'an'. Meaning was occasionally blurred by the levels of error. There was often confusion and inconsistency in the use of person and pronoun. A pervasive error was the confusion of the demonstrative adjectives 'this' and 'these': phrases such as 'these challenge'; 'this activities' were very common, appearing in responses otherwise fluent and accurate.

### Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- be prepared to explore, challenge and discuss the ideas in the passages
- make sure the ideas you use are derived from the passages
- look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly by the writers
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passages as well some depth in evaluating them
- be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly; think carefully about the kind of style the audience for your article would expect as well as how articles should begin and end
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words.

## Section 2: Composition

Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions.

Up to 13 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 12 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.

### Descriptive Writing

**2 (a)** Write a description with the title, 'Underwater'.

**OR**

**2 (b)** Describe the scene and atmosphere as you wait for your turn to be interviewed.

This genre was chosen across the range of abilities, with the first option marginally more popular. At all levels, some provided a context for the required scene, while weaker responses, especially to **Question 2(a)**, became more narrative than descriptive. More effective responses framed their descriptions in a more controlled manner, providing enough context to introduce their writing and to provide cohesion, though the most successful responses to both questions involved the reader immediately without preamble. Some responses were more narrative in manner but included much vivid detail and developed images. Here, examiners were able to award marks in Band 5 or sometimes Band 6 for Content and Structure. The most effective responses to both questions produced writing of a very high order, earning marks in Band 7 for both elements. These were highly evocative, often creating overall pictures of considerable clarity and employing a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary.

**Question 2(a)** produced some very accomplished responses. The great majority interpreted the title literally, and there were many scenes of tropical waters and coral reefs. Descriptions of swimming underwater in rivers or struggling for survival in floods were also seen. A small minority interpreted the task metaphorically, evoking the pressures of overwork or depression, with varying levels of success. Some images were commonly used: the fading of the sunlight from above as the diver sank to the ocean floor; the swift-moving shoals of tiny fish scattered by the appearance of a larger predator; the shy octopus retreating to a cave; an ancient, half buried shipwreck. Some responses described encounters with dolphins often effectively evoking the texture of their skin, or terrifying skirmishes with sharks: *'Its gaping mouth lined with pristine quartz blades, its great head bearing the scars of past battles.'*

Responses awarded marks in Band 7 often created the *'convincing, original, overall picture'* required by the Mark Scheme. The majority of the responses awarded marks in Band 7 and Band 6 took the opportunity offered by the underwater scenario to bring their descriptions to a neat conclusion as oxygen tanks ran out, the sunlight above grew brighter, and they ascended to the surface, their boat's hull visible. Notable at this and lower levels of achievement was evidence of environmental concerns as the beauty of nature was contrasted with plastic and other detritus befouling the sea bed. Detail of damage to coral reefs was often seen: *'Shimmering schools of exotic vertebrates manoeuvred through the dull, forlorn skeletons of once vibrant corals.'*

Responses given marks at the lower end of Band 6 and in Band 5 approached the task more straightforwardly. These usually presented a number of images of undersea life, and often included enough descriptive detail to create the *'impression of reality'* required for marks in Band 6, but lacked the intensity apparent in Band 7 responses. In Band 5 sometimes the intended effect was diluted by describing too many aspects of the scene, or by spending too much time on lengthy preambles explaining the circumstances of the dive or excursion. There were at this level many quite effective pieces which demonstrated a grasp of the requirements of the genre. There were some engaging pieces awarded marks in Band 5, but often a higher mark was precluded by a lack of clarity in the description created. At the lower end of Band 5 there was a tendency simply to list what could be seen. Below that, description was limited to size and colour—big red rocks or small green fish. Some worked methodically through the *'I can see, I can hear'* sequence of sense impressions, even describing what could be smelt when deep underwater. At the lower end of Band 4 a few responses simply recounted a diving expedition chronologically with limited attempt to forge a piece of description.

The second descriptive option also elicited responses across the mark range although there very few responses that were overly narrative. Across all levels of achievement, responses to **Question 2(b)** attempted to evoke the scene and atmosphere as interviewees, usually for employment in an office, although occasionally in a theatre or a police station. In responses awarded marks in Band 7 there was some very



sophisticated writing, with richly detailed sensory description. A key discriminator here was the originality of the images of often mundane and familiar objects and surroundings such as typewriters, laptops, potted plants, corridors and filing cabinets, rendering them fresh and new to the reader. The most assured responses were able successfully to convey how ordinary or familiar environments can become daunting and even threatening in a situation of high anxiety about an important outcome. Elsewhere humour was used effectively. One response described waiting to be interviewed for a keenly desired job as a secretary in a dental practice. After some witty observation of the fish tank, flower arrangements and celebrity magazines, a subtle change of mind was conveyed: *'Slowly, I began to notice the beautiful fish and flowers less, and the dentist's pamphlets with explicit photos of gum disease more.'* Some very effective and convincing descriptions, while appearing to focus entirely on external details, successfully created the feelings of the speaker and the ambient atmosphere. Others awarded high marks eschewed all physical reality, concentrating instead on description of thought and feeling. The majority of responses combined the two, linking them fluently to create the 'well-chosen images' required by the Mark Scheme for Band 6 and above.

Responses to **Question 2(b)** awarded marks in Band 6 and Band 5 were competent and often convincing descriptions, offering some well-chosen images, or effectively describing their thoughts, feelings and aspirations as they waited anxiously. There were images of keyboards being tapped, clocks going slowly, papers being shuffled. Responses awarded a mark of seven and below were sometimes lacking in detail or included unconvincing exaggeration: sweat 'literally' running in rivers, teeth chattering in fright, everyone shaking so much that cups of tea were dropped and clothes ruined, heartbeats so loud that they could be heard across the room. A few in Band 4 were brief and lacked a sufficiently close focus on description, offering only a few details. At this level also some responses lost focus on the task and described the townscape outside or discussed previous employment.

Responses given marks in Band 3 or below were usually simple narrative accounts with little descriptive detail or evocation of feeling, setting or atmosphere.

### **Style and Accuracy**

High marks for Style and Accuracy were awarded to those responses which demonstrated a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary in the creation of images and effects but were also controlled and crafted to produce a harmonious whole, virtually free of error. In the middle ranges, vocabulary was plainer or less-precisely applied, and images less striking. Weaker responses were sometimes limited to unelaborated accounts of personal experience. Consecutive sentences beginning with 'I' (some lower case) typified these less effective responses.

In previous sessions, the most frequent issue in awarding Style and Accuracy marks was the significant number of responses in which many sentences were without a main or finite verb. Even where there were other qualities which went some way to compensate, examiners could not award a mark higher than Band 4 where this error persisted. Uncertain control of tense was also apparent and equally damaging. Responses awarded Writing marks in Band 6 or 5 for **Question 1** often earned lower marks for the compositions. A lack of effective paragraphing, and misuse of commas, also reduced the marks for many responses. Sometimes responses given marks in Band 4 or below for Style and Accuracy demonstrated an extensive range of vocabulary, and accurate spelling, but had poor control of syntax and sentence structure, sometimes to the point where communication was impaired. Insecure use of capital letters or using them exclusively throughout the piece of writing was also noted by examiners at lower levels of achievement.

### **Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:**

- remember the key requirements of descriptive writing; you are not writing a story
- try to be original, both in the scenarios and the images you create
- write sentences with proper verbs; there are no separate rules for descriptive writing
- ensure consistency of tenses
- make deliberate choices in your vocabulary and sentence structures to create effect.

### Narrative writing

**3 (a)** Write a story with the title, 'Under suspicion'.

**OR**

**3 (b)** Write a story that begins with an important announcement.

Narrative writing was the choice of almost two thirds of the candidature, with **Question 3(b)** being much more popular than **Question 3(a)**. Marks across the range were awarded to responses to both questions. Examiners were able to award marks at the top of Band 7 in a number of cases, but at all levels of achievement engagement with the tasks was evident, with both titles producing some lively and often intriguing narratives. Responses to both titles often included interesting descriptive detail which enhanced the narratives. The difficulty of creating satisfactory conclusions to the stories was noted, underlining the need to have the end of the story in mind in the process of writing it.

There was a wide range of interpretations of the title, with stories covering almost any kind of criminal or immoral behaviour though sometimes it was difficult for the examiner to see the connection with the title. There were many action-packed narratives of crime-solving or military action. Frequently these were not awarded marks in the higher Bands for Content and Structure, largely because they were packed too densely with incident and action, and lacked the desirable qualities of characterisation and setting.

Somewhat more successful were those in the 'whodunnit' genre, although the working out of clues and suspects poses great challenges for timed writing and led to some partially credible conclusions. The most effective responses were those involving a limited number of characters and plot developments.

A well-constructed narrative awarded a mark in Band 6 had a neat twist in the conclusion; a young woman is tempted by a large payment to accommodate someone for a week in her flat. His strange appearance and behaviour make her increasingly anxious, and tension grows until he grabs her from her bed in an apparent abduction. In fact he was saving her from an intruder. Narratives were often more successful when set in familiar, credible circumstances.

Other responses similarly closely focused in time and space and employing a few well-drawn characters and spare but effective dialogue were awarded marks in Band 7 and at the top of Band 6. Responses to **Question 3(a)** awarded marks at the lower end of Band 6 and in Band 5 often had interesting features but lacked the assurance and ability to engage the reader of those given higher marks or had less convincing plotlines. There were many high-speed stories in which teenage protagonists brought down criminal gangs. These often ended with an undeveloped list of explanations. In the middle range there were often stories with interesting concepts and engaging characters but they were frequently marred by unconvincing endings. Responses at the lower end of Band 5 and below were sometimes unrealistic tales of crime, horror or war or undistinguished series of events. Typical of many event-driven responses was an imbalance in their constituent parts, with the crucial suspicion or its resolution occurring abruptly and often in a final, short paragraph.

The second narrative question was the most popular of the composition choices and elicited many effective narratives and a wide range of subject material. At all levels of achievement there were many announcements of engagement, marriage or pregnancy. These often enabled interesting presentations of domestic disharmony with effective characterisation which engaged the reader. 'Important announcements' also frequently concerned military coups, the imposition of martial law, imminent disaster such as tsunamis or some sort of global apocalypse. These narratives often attempted to engage the reader in exciting and dramatic scenarios but were packed with major events which were difficult to manage in the time available. Inevitably in such responses there was little time to develop characterisation or setting.

Responses often successfully employed a flashback technique after a strong beginning featuring the announcement. One very effective Band 7 response told a harrowing and well-plotted story: *"Warning, warning!" the robotic voice wailed. The risk factor of plague XLC-38 has reached emergency levels. All healthy citizens must retreat to plague bunkers; all medical staff must report to their recovery centres immediately.*" The narrative engaged the reader most effectively by the personal story of the protagonist, an aid worker who finds her own mother in extremis and cannot save her or herself. This was a good example of the use of close personal focus to anchor the narrative. Some strong narratives had a sustained build-up of interest and a well-managed twist.

Responses awarded marks at the lower end of Band 6 and in Band 5 were mostly quite realistic. At this level there were many announcements of pregnancy or engagement, received by family and friends in various ways. The more engaging narratives grew from hostile or dismayed reactions to the announcement: one response detailed the mostly happy reactions of the narrator's family members but for the shock expressed by the family matriarch, a well-drawn character, because the couple were not yet married. It concluded, *'Phew! If she carries on like that now, what would she say if she finds out the baby's not Sean's?'* In Band 5 and below many similar stories consisted of little more than the announcement, the delight of the family, the wedding or birth, and some conclusion. Occasionally tragedy intervened; the fiancé was killed or the baby died. Responses at this level also frequently lacked effective character development or convincing setting detail.

In Band 4 and below, responses were sometimes simple chronological accounts of events, some less effective responses resembling diary entries rather than developed narratives. These were given marks for Content and Structure in Band 4 or below.

Responses below Band 3 were usually simple series of events undifferentiated in importance and were often packed with unlikely combinations of events and characters. The weakest responses were usually very brief, offering little to engage the reader.

### **Style and Accuracy**

Examiners were able to award high marks for style and accuracy to many candidates whose vocabulary and sentence structures were varied and effective, and whose writing was free of repeated error. In the higher Bands, syntax, sentence structure and clausal position were often manipulated for effect, especially in the creation of narrative tension. In this genre, any inability to punctuate and paragraph dialogue properly was exposed, and sometimes proved a pitfall for otherwise fluent and accurate writers. The use of dashes rather than inverted commas to punctuate dialogue was seen at various levels of achievement. In the middle band, where there were a few basic errors of spelling and punctuation and plain, unvaried, vocabulary, the examiners could award a mark of seven or eight: conversely, clear and accurate sentence structure and straightforward paragraphing could compensate for a lower mark for Content and Structure. Marks in Band 4 were given when writing was marred by misuse of commas, weak punctuation, and faults in tense control and agreement. Confusion or inconsistency in the use of gender pronouns was seen quite often. The misuse or omission of capital letters inevitably reduced the marks given for otherwise sound writing. Occasionally only a mark in Band 5 could be awarded because serious errors in sentence structure and syntax impeded communication.

### **Ways in which the writing of narratives could be improved:**

- plan your story so that you do not run out of ideas for the plot, and you can bring it to an interesting conclusion
- remember that you can use your own interpretation of the titles
- make your story believable by creating realistic characters and settings
- leave some time to check through your work for errors which will seriously affect your mark, such as basic errors in spelling, capital letters and punctuation
- try to consider alternative interpretations of the titles given, don't try to make the story fit the title if the ideas used are not appropriate.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/32  
Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

### General comments

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and interest the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct varied sentences accurately
- use appropriate, precise and wide-ranging vocabulary.

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of how to approach the tasks in both sections, Directed Writing and Composition. The majority of responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were few very brief scripts. Nearly all candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task, though there were a small number where more than one Composition question was attempted. In **Question 1**, a few responses were mostly or wholly copied from the passages in the Reading Booklet Insert or, more commonly, where synonyms were used for some of the words and phrases in the passages and the structure of the passages was adopted with limited adaptation to the task.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of the reading passages in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and register for a letter to a family member and there was in many a clear attempt to argue and persuade the recipient. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to create a clear and persuasive argument. In the middle of the mark range, responses tended to reproduce the points made in the passage, sometimes reiterating the arguments in the second passage but without commenting on their validity. Examiners noted that at this level responses used the arguments from the second passage to raise some doubts about the holidays described in the first, but without offering any critique of the arguments against eco-tourism given in the magazine article.

Weaker candidates tended to repeat the ideas in the passage, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. In some weaker responses, this resulted in a lack of cohesion and some contradiction of competing ideas.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response and the ideas in the passages were scrutinised thoughtfully. Sometimes, insufficient use was made of the reading material and opinions on travel or the notion of 'eco-friendliness' or the environment in general were offered with limited reference to the specific ideas in the passage. The informal style required for a letter to someone familiar was understood by the majority of candidates though sometimes the tone and style of a letter was sometimes not sustained. For example, appropriate opening and closing sentences for the letter, particularly the valediction at the end, were fairly often not used.

More effective responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for an informal letter. These were polite but evaluative in style, using ideas from the passages to create and structure arguments and often employing rhetorical devices and showing a strong sense of audience. Some in the middle range of marks wrote with some awareness of the intended audience though a more discursive summary of the reading passages were given rather than a persuasive letter. Less effective responses relied more on the sequence of the points made in the passages with less selection and regrouping of ideas from the originals. This sometimes made for a disjointed and less coherent style and structure.

In the compositions, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the descriptive writing questions were very effective and sustained. There were some imaginative evocations of places which had hosted festivals of varied kinds in the first descriptive writing question which Examiners found engaging and effective. A wide range of approaches was employed in the second. Some used a contrast between a quiet time in a shop and a particularly busy time, while others focused on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator as the shop became overrun with customers. In both questions, descriptions were better when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere which evoked the scene imaginatively. Less effective responses to both descriptive writing questions tended to contain straightforward physical descriptions or, often, some reliance on narrative with less descriptive focus.

The most successful narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible. Both narrative questions elicited a very wide range of approaches and interpretations and Examiners awarded marks across the range here.

Less effective narratives were less credible and there was often less overall cohesion and narrative purpose. Some were simple, chronological accounts and were under-developed as narratives and less cohesive in structure. The second question allowed for a wide range of interpretations of the idea of a 'journey', both physical and metaphorical, though some responses

Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. The best descriptive writing was specific, used some original and thought-provoking imagery and effectively evoked the atmosphere of the time and place described. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of credible characters were features understood by the most effective writers who chose narrative writing options.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### ***Section A: Directed Writing***

#### **Question 1**

**Imagine you have a relative who wants to plan an eco-friendly holiday. They have asked for your advice. Write a letter to your relative offering your advice.**

**In your letter, you should:**

- **evaluate how far it is possible to be eco-friendly as a tourist**
- **suggest the concerns your relative should have about booking a trip with Backpack.**

**Base your letter on what you have read in the article, but be careful to use your own words.**

**Address each of the bullet points.**

**Begin your letter: ‘Dear ...’**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

As usual in the Directed Writing question, Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing or challenging of the points made in the passages, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in it. Where the letter was also both accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, often with a consistent sense of audience, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded. Most effective responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the second passage and the way in which problematic aspects of eco-travel were skated over in the first. The highest marks were awarded for those where the contradictions inherent in the notion of eco-tourism were exposed with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the inferences contained in the passages were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates’ achievement.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward. Some listed the explicit points in the passages about the places offered by Backpack, and the doubts expressed about eco-tourism in the second passage. Responses often included some opinion or reaction to the ideas in the passage though without evaluation of them. Examiners noted that many responses at this level offered the arguments in the second passage as their own but without applying real scrutiny to them.

At this level, the ideas included showed an understanding of the main ideas in the passage although opportunities to challenge their validity were not taken. Responses could have been improved by more thoughtful consideration of the opposing ideas rather than simple reproduction of them.

Less effective responses showed some understanding of the ideas in the passages but there was reference to a narrow range of points or there was some misunderstanding of ideas or the task was not properly understood. Weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic at this level, particularly where contradictory points conflicted with each other between the two passages. The letter often did not follow the conventions of letter writing or the information in the passage was not adapted in style and purpose, reading more like a summary of the passages than a transactional piece of writing.

#### **Marks for reading**

The best responses, as always in this task, adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passages, drawing inferences and making judgements about the how far, or even whether, it is possible to travel in an eco-friendly way for a holiday. Most responses included the guidelines in the second passage about how to protect the fragile environments visited and most showed some understanding of the need to be more aware of the impact tourists might have on them. More thoughtful responses went to the heart of the key contradiction of travelling many miles in order to ‘protect’ the most fragile places in the world. Most also saw the mismatch between the eco-friendly intentions of businesses such as Backpack and their need to make profits in an increasingly competitive market.

Some perceptive responses explored directly the tensions between protecting the planet and wanting to explore it responsibly. The comparison made in the second passage, between an eco-friendly holiday such

as those offered by Backpack and a 'fuel-efficient' flight to Paris, gave careful readers some food for thought. Some effective responses used the idea to show that the destinations offered by Backpack were much further away than Paris and that Backpack gave no indication how the inevitable environmental damage done by flying to them, or sailing around them, would be offset: 'One could argue that Paris has already damaged its environment with all its hotels and attractions but nobody wants to see people queuing up to see rare creatures in the Antarctic like they do in Paris for the Eiffel Tower!' Other perceptive readings of the passages elicited some comment on the language used by Backpack to describe their destinations, such as 'untouched', 'cleanest', 'clearest', and suggested that it could not protect such places as long as it wanted to make money by attracting people to them. Backpack's schemes to add value to their holidays were also probed carefully by many at the highest level, with many making thoughtful inferences about what the company did not tell its customers, such as how much money was donated to charities and which charities benefited. The 'Pack for a Purpose' scheme was challenged in a number of ways: some suggested this did nothing for the fragile environments visited, that it created a damaging dependence on tourism or that it directly contradicted the more common eco-friendly practice of buying locally.

Other successful approaches to the task involved a closer focus on the perceived needs of the relative from a holiday. The potential added costs involved in Backpack's charity donations and 'Pack for a Purpose' were noted by some. Many also suggested that the 'unsophisticated facilities', especially the rule about 'taking too many showers', did not sound very appealing when most people wanted to relax and enjoy themselves on their holidays. The number of rules and restrictions to be adhered to were seen as off-putting and limiting: 'Who wants to be looking over their shoulders the whole time worrying about whether you've stepped on some rare plant when you could be soaking up the sun and having a ball on your two weeks off?' The lists of rules to follow on Backpack's holidays were cited in some responses as 'the things we should follow every day wherever we are' or 'sensible ways to live'. The lack of enforceable guidelines for eco-tourism was also a focus of some insightful evaluation. Backpack's boast of 'strict adherence' to such rules was exposed as empty and meaningless without a mechanism to police them and in some responses this idea was combined with the profit-driven business model of eco-tourist companies to show that it was inevitable that corners would be cut and the environment left the poorer for eco-tourism.

Examiners awarded Band 5 marks where there was some evaluative commentary in places but the response as a whole did not offer a consistent critique of the ideas in the passages. In some cases, the arguments contained in the second passage were reproduced but their implications for Backpack's holidays were not explored. The contradictions of eco-tourism were sometimes reflected without recognising that these arguments were part of the angle and approach taken by the writer of the second passage.

Another approach which was not consistently evaluative was where the doubts about eco-tourism in the second passage were understood and reproduced but Backpack was discussed exclusively as a good example of sound, ethical eco-tourism. This was perhaps a rather superficial reading, often based on Backpack asserting their 'eco' credentials repeatedly and the unspoilt nature of their destinations.

Responses given 7 marks tended to respond more evaluatively to some ideas more than others. Many accepted Backpack's descriptions of its holidays at face value but could point out that the cost to the tourist might be prohibitive if extra supplies for locals had to be carried or if the charity donations were made using their customers' money. In some responses, there was evaluation of the 'Pack for a Purpose' idea as inconsistent with green principles or patronising to local inhabitants. In the closing comments of some responses, Examiners were able to credit as evaluation some grasp of the inherent contradiction in being part of a potential influx of tourists into previously untouched environments.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 4 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passages but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passages. There was often less argument and focus on using the passages to arrive at a judgement about how far it was possible to be an eco-friendly tourist, and Backpack's claims to have a principled approach were generally accepted with limited discussion or doubt expressed. While the points made were given mostly in candidates' own words, the structure of the second passage was often replicated in responses. In some responses given 6 marks for Reading the arguments in the passages were regrouped a little but some contradictions or more subtle ideas were not addressed or there was limited application of the arguments against eco-tourism in the second passage to the claims made by Backpack in the second. To score higher marks for Reading, Examiners looked for some scrutiny of the apparent contradictions in both passages rather than reproduction of them.

Less secure responses, in terms of the Reading mark, showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passages or addressed the material thinly. Some tracked through the passages simply but gave a straightforward paraphrase with little reorganisation and frequent lifting of words and phrases from the

passages. In these cases, Examiners were not convinced that the key ideas in the passages had been understood. Misunderstanding of some ideas was common at this level. In some responses, the holidays on offer were thought to be backpacking trips and the merits of carrying backpacks were discussed without understanding of Backpack as a company or of eco-tourism as a concept. In other responses, there was advice about how to be environmentally aware in general, rather than as a tourist. Some responses only addressed the first passage in any detail, often looking at the different destinations and choosing between them with little reference to the idea of eco-tourism or its limitations as outlined in the second passage. Copying of phrases and, sometimes, whole sentences was also very common. Where a mark of 4 was awarded, some firmer links with the passages were needed, whereas 3 was generally given for very thin or mainly lifted responses in which there was some insecure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

### **Marks for Writing**

15 marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **Style and audience**

An informal tone was required for a letter to a known, familiar individual and most responses were written in an appropriate register, even where the writing was technically weak. Opening sections made reference to shared experiences or family connections and often closed in a similarly appropriate vein. Although not always sustained, most letters began with a straightforward introduction to the purpose of the letter and made reference to the reading material, either as separate texts or their own views, as evidence to support their advice. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical, stylistically persuasive style and presented their arguments with some subtlety of tone, always maintaining an apt tone but making their case effectively and with some impact: 'I just can not see you, Aunt Lizzie, a woman who loves her luxuries and comforts, getting bossed about to follow the rules in some freezing, empty godforsaken place where you can not even have a shower when you feel like it!' In another persuasive response, the advice given included the observation that the relative should not 'buy into this cynical exploitation of your long-held beliefs as an environmentalist to put money into these charlatans' pockets.'

In the middle range, the letter usually began in an appropriate tone and style but there were lapses in awareness of audience. The content and tone of the letter, once the opening sentences were given, became more an account of what was written in the passages and often the valediction at the end of the letter was forgotten. Most often at this level there was limited argument to give the response shape and purpose, even where the passage was adequately reproduced. Several points made in the passage were listed but there was often less development of the advice given to the relative beyond, perhaps, wishing them a happy holiday in whichever destination they chose.

Less effective responses sometimes had limited overall cohesion because the different opinions in the passages were simply reproduced as they appeared in the original.

### **Structure**

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the advice which emerged was clearly derived from the ideas in the passages but the response had its own cohesive structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the first paragraph and the information and views given were gleaned from both passages and assimilated into the candidate's own argument. One response, for example, after some pleasantries, opened with 'I know how much you want to see the beautiful wild places of our planet, but I'm afraid the whole idea of eco-tourism is flawed and full of contradictions which make it nothing but a money-making scam.' The opening and concluding paragraphs of this and other well-structured responses addressed the purpose of the letter clearly and objectively, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case.

Responses given Band 6 marks for Writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the passages but were reordered and sensibly structured and paragraphed. In most cases the bullet points in the task were used to give structure and cohesion to the response, so that conflicting ideas were addressed separately. Less effective responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the passages whereas Band 5 responses were usually organised more selectively. Straightforward Band 5 responses were paragraphed and balanced and followed the conventional structure of letters.



Some less effective responses given marks below Band 5 were limited in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passages, often with a degree of lifting and copying. This approach led to some weakness in cohesion and some disjointed use of contradicting points.

### Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 7. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used to create specific effects. Rhetorical flourishes, such as the use of contentious, challenging questions or exclamations, were often used at this level, as illustrated above.

Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation.

Band 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually plain, the language used was apt. A range of quite basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. Commonly used words were also wrongly spelled in responses at this level, especially 'your' and 'you're', 'advice/advise' and some words used in the passages such as 'environment', 'business', 'vulnerable' and 'facilities'. There were occasional lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical disagreement. Tense use was uncertain in some responses, particularly in phrases such as 'Mum had asked me to advise you..' or 'I had done some research.'

Faulty sentence structures, insecure tense use or weakly demarcated sentences often kept writing marks for **Question 1** below Band 5, even where spelling were more accurate. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Band 5 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. The omission of definite or indefinite articles, tense errors and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the passage was copied almost entirely.

### Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- be prepared to challenge and disagree with the views in the passages and always justify and explain your own conclusions
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the passages and comment on them
- look for the key ideas given in the passages and focus on them
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them
- be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly; think carefully about the kind of style the recipient of your letter would expect as well as how letters should begin and end
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

### Section 2

#### Descriptive Writing

**2(a) Write a description with the title, 'The day after the festival'.**

**OR**

**2(b) Imagine you work in a shop. Describe a time when the shop is particularly busy.**

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates. Examiners saw a range of different approaches to the tasks. In the first task, a wide range of different kinds of festivals in various settings was depicted at all levels of achievement. One fairly common subject was the aftermath of a large-scale music festival, with some focus on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator as they emerged from sleep on the morning after. The selection of specific details often gave candidates an opportunity to contrast the atmosphere of the day after with the festival itself. In some responses, there was a focus on the eerie silence of the scene while in others the impact of the festival on the narrator's mind and body was described in some detail.

In the second question, a wide variety of details and images was used to describe a scene in a busy shop. Various kinds of shops in different locations were described with some responses structured around the contrast between quiet and busy times and others focused on the sense of dread or exhaustion experienced by the narrator.

Some successful responses to the first question focused on the writer's thoughts and feelings as they surveyed the scene the day after a festival. A rather melancholy mood was created in a number of evocative responses to this question. There were striking images of forgotten or abandoned objects which recalled the atmosphere of the festival itself. In the most successful responses, unusual or apparently insignificant but closely observed details created an impression of reality.

In one, for example, an extended metaphor of ghosts and spirits was used to describe the scene after a festival, where the vibrant colours of the day before had become muted and faded into shades of grey when seen through the eyes of a sad and reflective narrator. Most were constructed in a fairly straightforward way, with a paragraph devoted to some aspect of the scene, though many were sustained and developed and showed skill in creating a detailed scene which was often emotionally charged. At the top of the mark range, some highly skilled writing wove complex emotions into the depiction of the scene, creating cohesive responses held together by a single thread or concept of ideas. Memories of the actual festival the day before also featured strongly in effective responses to this question, though these were often fleeting and now tinged with a different kind of emotion. One effective piece described the narrator waking up in a country hotel which had been the venue for a large wedding celebration the day before. The drooping decorations and the stray flowers which had fallen from the buttonholes of the dancing guests gave the happy occasion a rather melancholy atmosphere in its aftermath. Other successful descriptions used the perspective of a hungover, regretful narrator to depict a miserable landscape of bedraggled tents, empty bottles and the debris left after a large scale outdoor music festival. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader's interest by linking the different elements described in an engaging way, often suggesting the kind of atmosphere of the festival itself but without relying on narrative. In a significant number of responses at Band 6 and above, there was some conscious use of imagery which helped to evoke the scene. Where this technique was controlled and used sparingly, the effects created were striking and original. In one description, for example, set in a village where people had come together to celebrate a religious festival, the rain overnight had 'swept the gawdy decorations into a swamp of muddy memories'.

Middle range responses were characterised by rather more obvious images and ideas and the sensory impressions given were more mechanically listed and organised in different paragraphs. The blinding headaches and nausea of hangovers featured commonly, and although the images used were less original and striking, they were relevant and apt and some were more effective. Some responses at this level lapsed into narrative about the day of the festival itself or were hampered by an over-reliance on the narrator's own state rather than the scene observed. At the lower end of Band 5 for Content and Structure, some responses were a little unbalanced, with more narrative which tended to overshadow the focus on detail and description. In some, the description sometimes became a more straightforward list of what was seen and heard and lacked the emotional engagement suggested by the title which was evoked in better responses. The descriptive content tended to be a little more stereotypical or general than responses given higher marks.

Less effective responses were characterised by a tendency to list details briefly rather than develop them or a narrative introduction became a series of events rather than a preamble to description. Sometimes, sense impressions were given in a rather mechanical way, starting each paragraph with 'I can see..' or 'I can hear..' and the description relied on more clichéd ideas and images. Most responses to this question were organised and paragraphed but at this level the descriptions of each feature were brief and general rather than developed and specific.

The second question was equally popular and there were some effective and highly skilled descriptions here. Various scenarios worked well for candidates given high marks for Content and Structure here. While most descriptions focused on the shop itself, the customers and the staff, others used different times of the day to show the changing atmosphere. The quiet, orderly calm of the early morning often gave way more gradually to the chaos and noise of a busy shop in these more effective responses, for example, and there were many responses where the aftermath of an onslaught of customers was described to good effect. Some responses focused on the narrator's thoughts and feelings and managed to evoke the mounting dread of a young, nervous shop assistant at the height of the Christmas shopping season with some success. As always, closely observed detail worked better than broad generality.

Examiners gave marks below Band 5 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus, and where there was limited organisation of the details described. Again, sense impressions were often used with limited effect at this level or strings of details were listed with less effective overall cohesion. At this level, responses often became simple, unengaging accounts of a day in the life of a shop worker rather than a description of the surroundings at the time. In other responses, the description was general rather than specific, describing the crowded shop's customers as 'a swarm of bees' or 'a tidal wave' but without the closer focus needed to build the scene in the reader's mind. While paragraphs were mostly used accurately, paragraphs were not linked to cohesive whole.

Marks for Style and Accuracy, in the most effective responses, reflected the precision and variety of vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. The ability to use language carefully and consciously to create a specific effect, such as the sense of melancholy left after a celebration in the first task or the sensation of being overwhelmed or overrun in the second. In the middle range of marks, vocabulary was often varied but imprecisely used and in some cases not well understood. Strings of adjectives to describe objects or people sometimes contained contradictory or inappropriate choices: for example, a shop front was described in one response as 'posh, delapidated and prolix'. In the middle range, vocabulary was less rich and varied but there was still a fair degree of accuracy in spelling and sentence construction. In less secure responses, as is often the case in descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. Incomplete or verbless sentences were very common, even in scripts where responses to **Question 1** showed a secure grasp of sentence structure, and some responses used hardly any complete sentences: 'A wall of people swarming the shop like bees. People grabbing at items on the shelves like their lives depended on it. Children screaming and picking up items with their sticky hands.' Another common weakness here also was the demarcation of sentences with commas rather than full stops. This often meant that Examiners could not award marks in Band 5 where the style was otherwise quite accurate and secure.

**Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:**

- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content; choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus
- keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a particular atmosphere
- write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses
- choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

**Narrative Writing**

**3(a) Write a narrative which includes the words, '... all the screens went blank ...'**

**OR**

**3(b) Write a narrative about a journey you make on your own for the first time.**

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses. Examiners sometimes saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title or where the quotation in **Question 3(a)** was not really important to the story as a whole. Occasionally, narratives seemed to be answers to previously set questions rather than those on the current paper or were not really appropriate responses to the given questions.

More effective responses, as is often the case in narrative writing, were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used interesting, credible storylines and paid attention to the reader's engagement with well-rounded characters. Both narrative titles implied some build-up of tension or a moment of jeopardy and most candidates made use of this to help construct their stories.

There were various structures employed in strong responses to the first question, rather than straightforward chronological recount. Stories sometimes began with the quotation from the title with some skilful release of significant detail as the story unfolded. One effective story began with the quotation, as a hospital monitor went blank after the patient had been involved in a prank that had gone wrong. Another was set in a high-tech office where bored and under-used young staff members hoped for some challenging work in their pursuit of hacking criminals, only to be confronted with a major cyber-attack on themselves. This narrative included some skilful characterisation and used sparing but precisely observed details to show the relationships between characters: 'I caught the Supervisor's eye as I scanned the room, lost in the tedium of another long afternoon of nothing. He lifted one eyebrow almost imperceptibly and I knew my card was being marked in the next round of redundancies.'

A wide range of scenarios was created in response to this title, often effectively creating tension and some resolution which maintained the reader's interest. Some high-scoring narratives were written in specific genres, with sci-fi scenarios or stories about contemporary battle zones. Effective responses showed an ability to create characters that were believable, even if the scenario itself was fantastic or unfamiliar. Science fiction stories or narratives set in the future were often very successful if the characterisation of the main protagonists was credible and rooted in detail and observation. Some school stories involved cheating such as downloading examination papers from the Principal's computer and there was a range of crime stories in which CCTV screens were involved. While there were some graphic or violent scenes included in many responses, at the highest level these were written with restraint and control which made them all the more effective.

Middle range narratives were usually more straightforward in structure and approach and in some cases these responses sometimes relied on some rather basic accounts of friends gathered around a television screen for an important match or televised event. Examiners could award marks in Band 5 for Content and Structure, even where the sequence of events was perhaps pedestrian and lacked drama and pace, provided the narrative was organised and there was some attempt at characterisation. Responses in this range, whilst often more predictable, were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some resolution or conclusion to the story overall, although some endings were a little lacking in impact.

Some began with the title quotation but resorted to 'It all began when....' to relate how this point was reached, producing clear accounts which were cohesive but without the drama and impact of more effective responses.

Less effective responses were often more dependent on a simple series of events which led up to a moment of tension, as implied in the task, but which lacked attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. The football match being watched by a group of friends would be stopped by the screen going blank at a crucial moment and the rest of the story involved the disappointed characters trying to find a way to discover the result or restore the power. Characters were identified, often in a list of names, but there was less in the way of real characterisation and observation of individuals and relationships. While the majority of less effective responses has some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative style. Occasionally, Examiners found that responses lacked a sense of narrative drive and purpose and were more akin to straightforward reporting of events.

For the second narrative question, there were varied interpretations of the idea of a 'journey'. Many narratives made use of the idea of a journey as a kind of rite of passage which was implied in the title. Many responses were built around an actual journey undertaken for the first time with some trepidation or nervousness. Travelling to visit relatives in other regions or countries, by bus, train or plane, was a common topic, as was leaving home to study at a university or college far from home. Others used the idea to convey the sense of a personal journey involving some important milestone or decision which led to some significant change in the narrator's life. Both approaches resulted in some high level, effective and engaging stories. Narrators sometimes embarked on a metaphorical journey towards a goal. In one which used the task in this more figurative way, for example, the writer began a search for a long-lost brother in an attempt to heal a family rift. Others used the 'journey' in a more concrete way but controlled the narrative effectively using credible, if dramatic events such as the hijacking of a bus in deserted bushland. The reactions of the terrified passengers depicted were entirely credible and engaged the reader throughout. While these kinds of ideas featured across the mark range, more effective responses prepared the reader and shaped the narrative in an engaging way. Another successful response featured a deeply troubled narrator, escaping from domestic turmoil, whose anxieties and fears were convincingly developed to engage the reader's sympathy. The journey itself became a vehicle through which the narrator revealed the events and relationships which had led to this point, so that the physical journey became a more metaphorical pathway to a better life.

Band 5 responses were generally more straightforward accounts in which the content was ordinary but there was still some organisation and shaping of the narrative and a cohesive story was produced. These tended to be a little less imaginative in their interpretation of the task but with some understanding of how stories create interest for the reader. The anxiety and nervousness involved in journeys undertaken alone featured in most at this level and in many cases the story did not really develop beyond the arrival at the destination to the evident relief of the narrator. While stories at this level were often cohesive and organised, there was less attention paid to the kind of characterisation and relationships between characters which helps to engage the reader.

Responses given marks in Band 6 were usually simple accounts of events and showed limited awareness of the reader or the features of narrative writing which elevate a sequence of events into a real narrative. Scenarios which quickly became cliched and unengaging were used, such as murders, kidnappings or chases, many of which lacked credible explanation. These responses lacked narrative shaping and interest. Some produced organised and paragraphed pieces which were more a series of events than narrative in style and intent.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Punctuation within sentences, particularly in the use of dialogue and for effect, was skilfully used in responses in the higher Bands and where coupled with a sophisticated and precise use of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Responses awarded marks in Band 6 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still accurate and largely fluent while Band 5 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary but had few errors which damaged the clarity of meaning such as weak sentence control and sentence separation. There were, at almost all levels of achievement, errors where words were wrongly divided or joined, such as 'alot', 'aswell', 'eventhough', 'can not', and 'all though'. 'Although' was fairly often used where 'however' was needed.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Band 5. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones ('it's/its' and 'your/you're, especially) commonly appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. The most frequent reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Band 5 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed. The mixing of tenses within a narrative, sometimes within a sentence, was also prevalent. This was more marked in descriptive writing but also occurred in narrative writing, where stories seemed occasionally to have been transcribed from speech: 'Suddenly, a man appeared in a corner of the train carriage. He has a gun in his hand pointing straight at me.'

A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 5 and even when written in a fairly pedestrian style Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Where there were errors, even quite frequent errors, but the style had more ambition and variety, a mark of 9 was awarded. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks below Band 5. In some cases, despite accurate sentence construction, sentence structures were simple and repetitive and the vocabulary was limited and fairly simple. A few responses were very brief and faulty in style, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

**Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:**

- think about the build-up towards the most important moment in your story
- try to consider alternative interpretations of the titles given; do not try to make a story fit the title if the ideas used are not appropriate
- characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader; do not rely on events
- check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/33  
Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and interest the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct varied sentences accurately
- use appropriate, precise and wide-ranging vocabulary.

## General comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were relatively few very brief scripts, although there were some. Only a handful of scripts were found by Examiners to have had more than one composition question attempted, showing that the great majority were familiar with the rubric of the examination. In these rare cases, while each response was given due regard by Examiners, there was inevitably some effect where insufficient time had been devoted to one of the tasks.

Most responses showed a clear understanding and engagement with the material in both passages in **Question 1**, concerning the management of humour in the workplace and whether such humour is effective or appropriate. The task concerned writing a magazine article discussing this subject and responses usually paid some attention to the style and register of magazine journalism. The majority of responses approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the two passages. Better answers tended to structure their responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in both passages to support a cohesive point of view. Some candidates tended to reiterate the ideas in the passages, often in the same sequence rather than selecting and regrouping points. Most made good use of both bullet points in the question to help structure the response. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material or there was only a tenuous grasp of the task itself. The register of a magazine journalist writing to their target audience was usually successfully applied. In less effective responses there was often some general commentary concerning humour in an office, usually with examples, with one or two points from the passages addressed, but opportunities to discuss, weigh up and evaluate the ideas in two passages were missed.

Better responses paid considered attention to the audience and style required for a magazine article. These responses were successful in introducing and explaining the extent to which office humour can be deemed appropriate and effective, and considering in appropriate depth the range of different approaches the subject, Gerry, could take concerning his own behaviour. These were engaging in purpose, using both passages to create and structure arguments with some sense of audience and purpose. Some in the middle range of marks showed an insecure register, becoming inconsistent in style and vocabulary. In other responses at different levels, responses followed the sequence of the passages with less selection and reordering of ideas and did not manage to create an individual point of view. Some responses made insufficient use of one or

other of the passages. Both Passage A: the letter from Gerry, and Passage B: Remy's letter in response; carried equal weight and the ability to select and cross refer between both passages was a discriminating factor during assessment.

In the compositions, the descriptive and narrative genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers, although for this paper the narrative questions were more popular. Better responses in the composition section as a whole were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged. Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and although there was some narrative content in the middle range, most responses gave a range of relevant descriptive detail. Most responses to the first descriptive question, about a 'forgotten' picture, were well-organised and clearly structured using paragraphs, with sections about the subject material and the circumstances when the picture was taken or created and the thoughts and feelings concerning the discovery. This was at times delivered with some sensitivity and range of emotion. There were some engaging descriptions of the 'place which was busy and is now quiet' in the second descriptive question, with some very gripping description of various moments of change and transition over time, whether the time scale described was short or much longer. Less effective responses here tended to fall into narrative with limited descriptive detail.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible and effectively managed. Some narrative writing was often characterised by inconclusive or unsatisfying endings, sometimes with simple storylines which were largely a series of events with limited awareness of the reader. In some cases there was limited narrative progression, even where the characterisation was quite effective. The first narrative, concerning the discovery of an 'unusual object', gave rise to a wide range of events and delivered some gripping narrative development. The second narrative question elicited a wide range of situations in life where the central character found a need to change in some way. Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. Descriptive writing was usually, but not always, focused on detail and evoking atmosphere and could have been improved by the use of less clichéd ideas and expressions. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of characters to stimulate the reader's engagement were features understood by effective writers.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### ***Section 1***

##### **Directed Writing**

**Imagine you are researching the use of humour in the workplace for a magazine article. You have interviewed people from Gerry's company about their experience of humour in the workplace and their attitudes towards it.**

**Write the magazine article.**

**In your article you should:**

- **evaluate to what extent humour in the workplace can be effective or appropriate**
- **explain how and why Gerry needs to adopt a different approach.**

**Base your article on the facts, ideas and opinions in the two letters, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the bullet points.**

**Begin your article with a suitable headline.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

**Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 15 marks for the quality of your writing.**

**(25)**

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

High marks for the reading and understanding element were awarded where there was some challenge and discussion of the points made in both passages, rather than a straightforward listing of the points made in them. Where the magazine article was also both accurate and appropriate in style, often with a consistent sense of audience and a polished style, Examiners could award very high marks indeed. Better responses tended to pick up the implied points made by Remy and Gerry and develop a detailed evaluation of these ideas. While the more straightforward aspects, such as business executives preferring workers with a sense of humour and that some types of humour can be offensive, were readily identified in most responses, Examiners awarded the highest marks where the extent of the effectiveness or appropriateness of the humour and the range of relevant ideas concerning the different approaches for Gerry were teased out and examined.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some listing of the ideas and concerns made about office humour and an acceptance or rebuttal of these claims at face value. These details were an accurate reflection of the ideas in the passages but there was limited comment on or examination of them.

Less effective responses showed some understanding of the main advantages and disadvantages of humour in the workplace although there was also some misreading in places. A thin use of the detail or weaknesses in organising ideas coherently was characteristic at this level.

### **Marks for Reading**

The best responses, as always in this task, adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passage to provide a subtle critique of the ideas surrounding humour in the workplace and its consequences. At this level, for example, the whole notion of the ethos of office 'banter' and the implications for senior and junior staff members were fully addressed. Both sides of the argument could be made, that humour was effective in some circumstances, with a clear place in the office environment that could create a positive atmosphere and efficient working environment; or that humour was at times hurtful and negative and was likely to cause a disruptive working atmosphere. The exploration of the relationships between senior management as role models and their junior staff was developed and evaluated. Some of the details in the passage were probed and challenged effectively. For example, the fact that Gerry stated that his jokes 'are not planned' and 'just happen' suggested that they were likely to have consequences that had not been anticipated; and the fact the 'most people laughed' clearly implied that not everyone was comfortable with the joke. While most implied that the Gerry's jokes were probably well-intentioned, it was possible to view the character of Gerry with a more negative interpretation and that he would be better working as an efficient manager than trying to be the 'class clown'. Few responses picked up on the fact that Gerry's confidence that executives preferred candidates with a good sense of humour was based on something that he himself had vaguely 'read somewhere' and responses usually treated this statistic as hard fact rather than question it.

The best responses also examined the nature of the office environment and the type of atmosphere that should exist in order for a workplace to be both happy, inclusive and still be an efficient business. At this level, there were also some thoughtful reactions to the implications for the management, the different workers and the company in terms of status and appropriate relationships. In this way, better responses used thoughtful inferences drawn from the passage rather than making straightforward expressions of opinion or preference.

This kind of consistently evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 6. Marks in Band 5 were given where there were glimpses of evaluation, often offering a judgement that humour should be positive and not abusive, but a more consistently wide-ranging evaluative stance was required for higher marks. Where responses reproduced the points made in the passage with limited comment on it or discussion of the ideas in it, Examiners could not award marks above Band 4.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 4 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above. Responses at this level showed a sensible understanding of the specific claims made in the passage about the nature of humour and Gerry's character as suggested by the reading material. Such responses tended to list the advantages and disadvantages of humour in the workplace, usually in the sequence in which the ideas appeared in the passage. Where there was some commentary on these issues, these remarks were not really evaluative at this level and could not be credited as such by Examiners. For example, Band 4 responses often stated that joking in the office was



definitely good, or bad, reproduced some ideas from the passage and left it at that. While such arguments were a valid response to the task, they did not make use of the implications and inferences that better responses could tease out of the passage. Examiners could award a mark of 6 where there was straightforward but wide-ranging coverage of the points in the passage but responses with more limited selection could be given 5 marks.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some were hampered by some misreading of the task and a difficulty in understanding the concepts in the reading material. Where a mark of 4 was awarded, some firmer links with the passage were needed, whereas 3 was generally given for very thin or brief responses in which misreading appeared. Marks below 3 were rarely given but in these cases the response was often a general commentary with very little connection with the passage.

It was equally appropriate in a response to decide to support the use of humour in the workplace or to have objections to it. Most did indeed decide to find a place for appropriate humour as long as there were checks and balances. Some responses suggested that Remy was a work colleague of Gerry, or that Remy was the 'victim' of the inappropriate humour. Although these ideas represented a misreading, it was still possible to be credited with some relevant interpretation of the reading material.

### **Marks for Writing**

15 marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **Style and audience**

An appropriate tone was required for a magazine article and most responses were written in a suitable register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some high scoring responses developed a professional and journalistic style focused on an audience that would have an interest in this material's content and subject matter.

In the middle range, the style was often appropriate, although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience. Responses sometimes started appropriately but changed tone, showing some insecure understanding of the appropriate style for the task.

Some responses sometimes failed to realise that this was meant to be a published article at all and offered little adaptation of the style and tone of the passage for a different audience and purpose.

It was appropriate but not necessary to include sub-headings and interviews within the response. The Question asked for a 'suitable headline' for the article, and there were many attempts to grab the reader's attention from the outset.

### **Structure**

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall argument which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given rather than a list of the points concerning humour in the workplace.

Responses given marks in Band 5 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the passage but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed to meet the demands of the task. Responses opened with a considered introduction and ended with a concluding paragraph which showed a clear sense of the purpose of the article. At the lower end of Band 5, responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the passage, whereas higher Band 5 responses usually organised and re-sequenced ideas more selectively.

Some less effective responses given marks below Band 5 were less coherent in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passage. This often led to some basic reiteration of the points in the passage but without the re-ordering of them which was needed to give the magazine article a sense of purpose and audience.

## Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 7. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. While these responses were fully appropriate in tone and register, the range and precision of vocabulary used, allowed for some quite complex arguments about the different interpretations of office humour to be made with clarity and style.

Responses given 7, 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually appropriate, a range of quite basic errors was made which marred the overall impression given. The nature and focus of the task exposed many simple grammatical errors, such as the very frequent use of 'could of' and 'would of' and the confusion of 'your' with 'you're' or 'their' with 'there'. The use of capital letters where they were not needed, even where there was otherwise general accuracy in the writing, was also noted by Examiners. Apostrophes were very often not used appropriately and sentence demarcation by commas rather than full stops began to creep in at the lower end of Band 5. Commonly used words were also wrongly spelled in many responses. These included words used in the passage such as 'business', 'prejudice' and 'morale' and frequent errors with homophones and grammar errors such as 'you was' and 'we was'. These errors, particularly in grammatical agreement created a jarring note sometimes in responses which were otherwise accurate and appropriate in style.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures often kept writing marks for **Question 1** in Band 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammatical errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Band 5 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. Persistent 'comma-splicing' was perhaps the most common reason Examiners were unable to award clear, coherent responses marks in Band 5. Some whole paragraphs were actually strings of simple sentences with commas rather than full stops to separate them.

### Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- be prepared to challenge and disagree with the views in the passages and always justify and explain your own conclusions
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the passages and comment on them
- look for the key ideas given in the passages and focus on them
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them
- be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly; think carefully about the kind of style the reader of your article would expect, as well as how such magazine articles should begin and end
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

## Section 2

### Composition

Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions.

Up to 13 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 12 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.

### Descriptive Writing

2 (a) Write a description with the title, 'The picture I'd forgotten I had taken'.

(25 marks)

OR

2 (b) Describe a place which used to be busy and is now quiet.

(25 marks)

The second descriptive writing question proved to be the most popular. Both descriptive titles provided responses across the mark range. In the first task, there were some strongly evocative and sensitive

descriptions of many different locations and characters within 'the picture' which produced a wide range of memories. In the second question, the best responses were able to describe any appropriate location with a considerable degree of creative description covering a combination of busy and quiet moments. As in previous series, the best responses remained fully focused on description and avoided narrative development which left description behind. In some cases, there was still a tendency to move towards narrative in both of these descriptive tasks.

In the most effective responses the picture written about in the first descriptive task developed material which had some personal meaning for the writer. These writers often infused their writing with a sense of nostalgia and engagement. There were often descriptions of pictures concerning places with childhood memories, including grandparents' homes, previous holiday destinations and old school photographs, and at the highest level the description often focused on the power of the chosen pictorial content to provoke deep feelings in the narrator. Candidates wisely avoided too much narration concerning the time leading up to the finding of the picture. It was fitting and appropriate for the response to vary in focus from the time the picture had been created and the changes that had happened over a period of time. There were some subtle observations considering the changes in the narrator as well as the subject of the picture from the past to the present.

Middle range responses to this question were characterised by more straightforward, often more physical descriptions of places and people. There was some clear descriptive detail, although the way in which it was organised was less varied and the approach more repetitive. Each detail was described with less subtlety and effectiveness overall. In many cases, there were descriptive lists for the location and the writer's range of feelings, losing the range of descriptive opportunities offered by the title such as the changes in descriptive focus.

Some responses were often characterised by over-long narrative preambles explaining the events leading up to the subject matter in 'the picture I'd forgotten' without really describing the key elements in the title. There was also some generalised and rather clichéd description at this level. A number of responses to this task had some very abrupt time shifts indicated by the phrase, 'Flashback when ...'.

In the second descriptive question, the best responses often included a clearly defined and established particular location, where the moments of calmness contrasted effectively with the moments of high activity and these were developed in descriptive detail. Better responses opened with engaging, well-realised pictures of the chosen setting and the striking nature of the moments. Responses considered a wide range of individual events, with markets, street scenes and shops being popular subjects as well as fairgrounds and festivals.

Responses given marks in the middle range were more straightforward in their approach to the task, including some rather more general qualities and attributes of the setting. The quality and effectiveness of the writing varied, but the structure of many average pieces relied on this straightforward approach. Examiners were often able to reward some description even where the overall structure and focus was more discursive or narrative. Examiners gave marks below Band 5 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus, where there was limited organisation of the details described or where strings of details were listed rather than described. Here, the purpose and intention of the writing was not primarily descriptive.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were sometimes lower than those for Content and Structure, even in some original and interesting responses. In the best responses, precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences were used. Images, words and phrases were employed to create specific effects and to bring the scene or character alive or the reader. In less effective responses, as is often the case in descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences, and incomplete or verbless sentences were common, even in scripts where responses to **Question 1** showed a secure grasp of sentence structure.

**Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:**

- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content; choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus
- keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a particular atmosphere
- write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses
- choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

## Narrative Writing

**3 (a) Write a story which involves finding an unusual object.**

**(25 marks)**

**OR**

**3 (b) Write a story about a character who wants to make some kind of change.**

**(25 marks)**

The first question elicited some engaging stories which included some interesting settings where the 'unusual object' was found. Many responses involved settings such as attics and cellars as well as a number of abandoned houses. The object itself ranged from ancient artefacts and magical items to top hats and other objects that remained unknown to the end. In better responses there was a clear resolution to the narrative as well as some control of tension and suspense to shape the reader's reactions. Better responses also clearly focused attention on characterisation, objects and setting. Some responses moved from the title to go on to establish the scene and the object requiring explanation and then move backwards in time to create the plot structure of the narrative. This control of chronology required some skill in story-telling which was often evident in good responses

Middle range stories were characteristically straightforward in structure and approach and in some cases, although the characterisation was effective and credible, the piece overall lacked narrative progression and drive. One feature noticed by Examiners was the tendency to evoke quite convincingly the location and the unusual object but without a real story. These responses were effective descriptions but little happened to the characters and there was no real plot or narrative cohesion.

Some responses relied too heavily on dialogue without narration and the plotlines were simple, linear accounts with less awareness of the needs of the reader being shown.

The second narrative task was completed by the largest number of candidates in this particular paper with marks being awarded across the range for both of these titles.

For the second narrative question, the type of change that was deemed necessary by the character was open to interpretation and there were many options developed and these were developed with varying success and credibility. The best were those which had a ring of authenticity about them and where there was a build-up or preparation which helped in creating a believable and effective narrative. There were some interesting narratives dealing with either changes within an individual or changes on a global scale.

Other responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived narratives or by less control over the material. Responses given marks in Band 4 were particularly dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while Band 3 marks usually reflected very brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting. A number of responses demonstrated little attempt to develop character or setting. Fantasy battles between warring superheroes trying to change events in the galaxy tended to move in this direction. Some stories became a series of events which did not really cohere and in a few cases there was little sequencing or overall clarity. A few responses gave a factual documentary analysis of a change that was felt to be necessary with very little sense of narrative content, structure or development.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Punctuation within sentences, in dialogue and for effect was characteristic of responses in the higher Bands and where coupled with a sophisticated palette of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. For 10 and above, a degree of fluency was needed as well as a clarity and accuracy of style.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. In many scripts, the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Again, basic punctuation errors with misused or omitted capital letters, the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 5 and even where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Where there were still errors but the style had more ambition and variety, a mark of 9 was awarded. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation

errors resulted in marks below Band 5. A few responses were very brief and faulty in style, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

**Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:**

- think about the build-up towards the most important moment in your story
- try to consider alternative interpretations of the titles given; do not try to make a story fit the title if the ideas used are not appropriate
- characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader; do not rely on events
- check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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**Paper 0500/04**  
**Coursework Portfolio**

## **General comments**

Many candidates produced coursework portfolios to be proud of which contained varied work across a range of contexts. Candidates demonstrated flexibility and the facility to adapt their writing for a range of audiences and purposes. Much of the work related to the candidates' personal interests and experiences and genuinely reflected matters that are important to young people today. The best work provided mature, sophisticated and engaging reading.

Many centres set a good range of appropriate and varied tasks which allowed candidates to respond in writing of three different genres. The most successful writing was related to the personal interests and experiences of the candidates. Writing was less successful when candidates responded to a limited range of tasks which lacked flexibility and opportunities for the candidates to respond in an original or personal way.

## **Key messages**

Candidates did well when they:

- wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them in a mature and sensible way
- structured the content of their writing in order to clearly guide the reader from one section of writing to the next
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of arguments or events
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and contexts for each of the three assignments
- revised, edited, proof-read and corrected the first drafts of each assignment
- wrote accurately and made very few errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## **Comments on specific assignments**

### **Assignment 1:**

Moderators reported that there appeared to be a much greater personal selection of topics by the candidates for this assignment. Many candidates were allowed to follow particular interests which resulted in mature, thoughtful and interesting work. Climate change, environmental issues and gender equality seemed particularly popular, with much of the writing reflecting the concerns that young people have about the world today. Most tasks set for this assignment were of an appropriate level of challenge for the candidates and allowed candidates to produce work that reflected their abilities. Although moderators reported that they saw fewer polemics, such as 'Room 101' and 'Do not get me started', some centres continued to set these tasks. Previous Examiner reports have commented on the limitations of this sort of task for helping candidates to produce writing which contains thoughtful, mature and considered arguments. Some centres also set very broad or frequently debated topics, such as the death penalty, legalising cannabis and school uniforms. Task such as these do not engage the candidates in the same way as tasks related to their personal interests might. This lack of engagement is often reflected in the quality and effectiveness of their writing and can make it difficult for candidates to meet the higher level assessment criteria.

Moderators also reported that when candidates had engaged in research of a particular topic, there was a tendency to rely too heavily on the ideas, words and phrases they had seen in their research. Candidates should present original ideas and thoughts using their own words. The overuse of words, phrases and ideas from research documents tends to result in loss of originality of thought and fluency in writing, and could result in unintentional plagiarism.

The majority of Assignment 1 pieces had a good sense of audience and the genre and form selected was clear to the reader. When the genre, form or intended audience was not clear writing tended to be less successful.

**Advice to candidates for Assignment 1:**

- write about a subject that is of importance and/or of interest to you
- be aware of the audience and purpose of your response and adapt your style accordingly
- try to develop your points to create a detailed and clear line of argument or discussion
- try to use your own words instead of quoting chunks of text from your sources
- acknowledge your use of quotes.

**Assignment 2:**

Many candidates produced original and engaging descriptions or narratives which reflected their personal experiences of the world or of people or events that were important to them. Less successful writing was produced when generic tasks were set and candidates were asked to describe places or people they did not know well, or to create stories in a genre that they did not fully understand.

**Description:**

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those in which the candidates had created a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place, or person and which were well sequenced and cohesive. Moderators saw descriptions of much-loved family members and places or events that were important to the candidates. Many candidates understood the need to be thoughtful and controlled with their use of vocabulary and to make sure that the vocabulary they used accurately reflected the content of their writing. Less successful descriptive writing was seen when candidates were overambitious with their vocabulary, over used complex words, or included images that did not match the content of their writing. There was a tendency with some centres to over reward use of complex language, even when the overall effect of the writing was not entirely successful.

Other tasks which resulted in less successful writing were those which required candidates to describe scenes from a film. Tasks such as these limit the opportunities for candidates to fully demonstrate the skills needed to meet some of the assessment criteria because the structure and content is provided for them by the film clips. This issue has been highlighted in previous Examiner reports.

**Narratives:**

With narrative writing, moderators reported that they noted a continued reduction in candidates producing unrealistic and incredible zombie, gothic and dystopian-style stories. Candidates tend to struggle with these genres of writing because the imagined situation is beyond their personal experience, so writing becomes clichéd and unconvincing. Previous Examiner reports have commented on the limitations of this sort of task.

Some of the most successful narrative writing was seen when candidates responded to personal experiences such as memorable events, journeys or people. There were moving accounts of how some candidates overcame challenging personal situations or wrote about important journeys they had undertaken with their families or close friends. Other successful writing was seen when the candidates fully understood their chosen genre for writing. It was clear in the work provided by many centres that candidates had been effectively taught how to create and write short stories in which setting, character and plot were developed in order to produce cohesive and entertaining writing.

**Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:**

- when writing to describe, try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of ideas and images

- when writing to describe make sure that you do not slip into writing a narrative, try to stay focused on description and create a clear sense of time, place and atmosphere
- when writing to describe try to avoid writing in list-like paragraphs which are unconnected
- write about something that you are familiar with, or something or someone you know well
- when writing narratives remember to structure your writing carefully and to follow the writing conventions for a short story
- choose vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects
- make sure that the images you create match the context and content of your writing.

### **Assignment 3:**

Many candidates responded to appropriate texts and provided responses which demonstrated their ability to analyse and evaluate ideas and to present their own lines of thought in response to the content of their reading. As with Assignment 1 and Assignment 2, the best responses tended to be written by candidates responding to texts about subjects or matters that interested them; for example, free college tuition in America, the effects of computer games on children's brains and speeches by activists such as Greta Thunberg. Less successful texts were those that were outdated, or which contained limited ideas and opinions with which the candidates could respond. Despite highlighting the limitations of certain types of texts in previous Examiner reports, moderators still saw a significant number of candidates responding to texts by Katie Hopkins (children's names), Jeremy Clarkson ('Stuff the Tiger') and Educating Essex. These texts are now old and unoriginal and public opinion may have changed since they were written. In addition, when candidates responded to text such as these, they tend to personally attack the author instead of evaluating the ideas and opinions contained within the texts. Other less successful responses were those written response to mainly factual texts containing limited ideas or opinions with which candidates could engage. To achieve Band 5 marks, candidates need to evaluate and analyse a good range of ideas from the text to provide an extended overview, or write an overall, structured response that assimilates many of the ideas and opinions presented within the text. Some of issues highlighted above can limit the opportunity for candidates to fully engage with this process and therefore limit their ability to meet the higher-level assessment criteria. Guidance on how to select appropriate texts for this assignment is given in the syllabus.

The most common form for responses to texts tended to be letters or speeches. On the whole it was clear that candidates understood, and could use, the writing conventions of the chosen form. However, it was noted that even some of the very best letters lacked an appropriate closing salutation such as 'Yours sincerely' or 'Yours faithfully'. This sort of error could easily be avoided if candidates carefully proof-read their work.

### **Administration:**

All centres are thanked for ensuring that the samples were sent to Cambridge for despatch to the Moderation team in good time. Moderators commented that they noted a significant improvement in the accurate completion of the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms (CASFs) and MS1s and that there were fewer samples sent in plastic wallets. However, a small but significant number of centres are still submitting portfolios of work in which the individual sheets of paper are not attached to the Individual candidate Record Card (ICRC). Paperclips and plastic wallets are not secure method of securing folders of work. As highlighted in the June 2019 Examiner report, in order to avoid loss or misplacement of candidates' work, it is essential that centres submit the individual portfolios of work in accordance with the instructions set out in the syllabus and Coursework Handbook. These documents can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge Assessment website.

### **Drafts:**

The overwhelming majority of centres provided a copy of a first draft of one of the assignments. It was evident from these drafts that many candidates had engaged in a process of editing and redrafting. However, moderators noticed that there was a significant increase in the number of drafts that showed no evidence of a process of revision, redrafting or editing by the candidate. On many occasions the drafts were almost identical to the final versions of pieces of work. There were also some instances where teachers had offered specific advice and guidance on how a candidate might improve their work. Teachers are required to make general comments at the end of drafts as to how a candidate might improve their work, but they are not allowed to make specific suggestions for improvement in the body or the margin of the drafts. Guidance on the drafting process can be found in the syllabus.



**Assessment:**

Moderators reported that assessment of Writing and Reading by the centres was generally accurate. It was clear from the provision of informative summative comments related to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment that many centres understood, and were able to apply, the mark scheme accurately. The accuracy of the application of the mark scheme may have been because many centres provided clear evidence that a process of effective internal moderation had taken place. With centres that provided little or no evidence of internal moderation, there was a general tendency to be either lenient or slightly severe with the application of the mark scheme. It is important that internal moderation is undertaken at the end of the course by the centre and recorded on both the CASF and the folder itself.

When moderators did not agree with a centre's marks it was often because structural insecurities or inaccuracies with the candidates' work did not seem to have been taken into account by the markers. As highlighted in the June 2019 Examiner report, it is essential that teachers indicate all errors in the final versions of the candidates' work. If this is not done, it becomes difficult for teachers to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and award an appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. It is important for teachers to understand that all errors, especially those made with typing, the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck, the incorrect use of commas and the confusion of tenses should be taken into account when awarding marks. Errors such as these can affect the overall meaning and quality of a piece of work and make it difficult for a candidate to meet some of the higher level assessment criteria.

**Good practice for the production and presentation of coursework portfolios was where:**

- centres set a range of appropriately challenging tasks which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects they were interested in, or of which they had personal knowledge or experience
- a wide range of appropriate texts were used for Assignment 3, which contained ideas and opinions to which candidates could respond, and were relevant to their interests
- centres set tasks which allowed candidates to respond in three different genres of writing
- candidates' responses were within the recommended 500 to 800-word limit
- teachers gave general advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- candidates revised, edited and carefully proof read their first drafts in order to improve their writing, including checking for errors with:
  - basic punctuation such as missing full stops, the incorrect use of commas and semi colons and the correct use of capital letters
  - typing errors
  - spelling, especially any words selected from spellcheck
- teachers provided informative summative comments relating to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment
- coursework portfolios were securely attached and presented as indicated in the syllabus,
- the CASF included all the candidates in the cohort and candidates were listed on the form in numerical order, with the candidates in the sample being clearly indicated by an asterisk.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/05  
Speaking and Listening

## Key messages

Most centres assessed candidates accurately and performed the required administrative procedures professionally and effectively.

Where there were issues, the following guidelines may help to clarify administrative requirements.

### **Administration – General Points**

- All the recordings for the entire cohort should be sent as part of the sample package to Cambridge. The centre does not have to choose which recordings to send.
- Each recording for every candidate entered should begin with a formal introduction by the Examiner to reflect the guidelines included in the syllabus.
- It is not acceptable for a centre to create one generic introduction for the whole cohort.
- All tests should be carried out within the boundaries of the test window stipulated by Cambridge. This is another reason every test should begin with a full introduction to include the date on which the candidate is being examined.
- Please check the forms very carefully before sending to Cambridge. Errors of addition on the Summary Form and transcription to the Mark Sheet delays the moderating process for a small but significant number of centres.
- Where total marks for a candidate have been altered because of internal moderation, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks has been changed.

### **Conduct of the test**

Generally, the standard of examining was very good with candidates being given many opportunities to express their views and exhibit their range of oratory skills.

Where there were concerns, the following advice is offered.

- In some centres, examiners engaged in an 'off topic' conversation with candidates before asking them to begin their **Part 1** task. While this was aimed at putting candidates at ease before the test it was not a necessary part of the process, led to some very long overall recordings and was distracting for candidates who really only wanted to begin their talks. It is strongly advised that each test should begin with the Examiner's formal introduction and be followed immediately by the candidate performing **Part 1**, the presentation.
- The importance of timing within the test should be appreciated. Where a **Part 1** response is significantly short of the minimum required, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met and assess accordingly. It is difficult to see how a response can meet higher band criteria in a performance lasting significantly less than the prescribed minimum time allowance.
- Given that both speaking and listening are assessed in **Part 2**, it is important that the discussions last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. It is the Examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation is met.

### **Accuracy of assessment**

In most cases, centres have applied the criteria accurately, appropriately and fairly whilst underpinning this through successful internal moderation procedures.

When considering what marks to award this guidance may be helpful:

- Examiners should not interrupt candidates within **Part 1**. Examiners should only interrupt to move the candidates into **Part 2** if they show no signs of reaching a natural conclusion after the maximum time prescribed.
- Examiners may prompt candidates who are struggling in **Part 1**, perhaps through loss of concentration or nerves, to help them get back on track. Asking a question however is inadvisable as this normally indicates **Part 2** has begun.
- Articulate, confident candidates may be over-assessed in **Part 1** when the content is largely factual or linear in nature rather than including analysis and reflection. A travelogue that only narrates a holiday day by day would fall into this category.
- The examiner must ensure a full **Part 2** discussion takes place. Short discussions generally inhibit the candidate's ability to fulfil the criteria in the higher bands.
- It is important that examiners do not over-dominate the discussions in **Part 2**. Candidates should be allowed to talk and their contribution should be dominant, particularly for those being awarded marks in the higher bands where detailed responses to questions and prompts are expected.

### **Approaches to Part 1**

The most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates took ownership of a topic, had a strong base knowledge of the subject and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses are generally more successful but responses do not benefit from an over-reliance on notes or over-rehearsal.

Once again, Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the tasks generally took the form of an individual presentation. Some dramatic monologues were presented and these tended to be well received. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. To achieve the higher bands, the presentations should move beyond the descriptive and narrative to include elements of reflection and analysis.

Some examples of productive **Part 1** topics include:

- My Love of Musical Theatre
- The Mandela Effect
- Food Waste
- Cultural Differences
- The Digital World
- Being Alone
- Identity
- Percussion
- Introverts
- Football Ticket Prices
- The Tooth Fairy
- Climate Change (and other environmental issues).

Some other examples of less successful **Part 1** topics include:

- The person I admire most (where the talk is purely descriptive and a series of regurgitated facts and rumours)
- Bullying (too vague when generalised and a possible safeguarding issue where more specific)
- Football (too generalised and unfocused)
- Social Media (becoming cliché ridden and repetitive)
- Future Career Plans (where the talk is generic and unfocused)
- Favourite Movie/TV Show (Where there is no attempt to move beyond the narrative and descriptive)
- A Project About Food
- My Holiday (Where there is only a linear narration of events)
- Video Gaming
- Pyrotechnics.

## **Management of Part 2**

Good examiners understand the role in **Part 2** is to provide stimulus for the candidates to express their ideas and opinions on their chosen topics.

Good examiners do not:

- consider their own thoughts and opinions to be more important than those of the candidates
- do not stick rigidly to a list of pre-prepared questions that limit any genuine discussion that may arise from what the candidate has said
- run out of relevant questions about the chosen topic and ensure a full discussion takes place
- allow discussions to meander into general conversation that is not focused on the topic.

Good examiners do:

- show genuine interest and enthusiasm in the candidates' topics, provide appropriate encouragement and are not judgemental
- give many opportunities for candidates to develop their ideas as fully as they can, providing open questions that help them to explore and develop the discussion
- avoid the use of closed questions. They understand that closed questioning limits the candidates' ability to respond at length.

In addition, good examiners are good listeners and do not hinder the candidates by interrupting or cutting into a discussion when it may be more advantageous to allow the candidate to continue. Detailed and developed responses are required if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded for Listening

## **Advice to centres**

- Please check administrative procedures to ensure a smooth and trouble-free moderation of your centre.
- Choosing the most appropriate topic is key to being successful in the test.
- Although candidates should prepare thoroughly, it must be remembered that **Part 1** is a demonstration of presentational skills and that the monotonous regurgitation of a memorised topic will not fulfil the criteria for Band 1.
- Give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills through effective discussion and appropriate timings for both parts of the test. Keeping to the timings prescribed in the syllabus will avoid candidates being adversely limited in the accurate application of the mark scheme.
- When conducting the discussions in **Part 2**, examiners should have plenty of relevant questions to ask to push candidates to fill the time for the discussion. Examiners should ask questions strategically to encourage and help the candidates to think for themselves and show off what they can do. Examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early, which can affect the candidates developing their own ideas.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/06  
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

The standard of administration and accuracy of assessment continue to be of a high standard.

## Key messages

### Administration

- When completing an Individual Candidate Record Card for each candidate, please provide specific information about the choices made for each task as this is important information for the Moderator. For **Task 1**, a comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful for the Moderator.
- All the recordings for **Task 1** and **Task 2** for the whole cohort should be sent in the sample packet.
- For **Task 1** it is helpful if for each candidate the file name is the candidate's name and examination number. For **Task 2** it is helpful if the file name contains at least the candidate numbers of both candidates involved.
- The teacher/examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. For paired activities, once this introduction has been made, it would be helpful if candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing before beginning the task. This will allow the moderator to clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.

## Key messages

### Approach to coursework

- Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met if the activity is very short.
- For **Task 1** a good comparison is the **Part 1** presentation within the 05 speaking and listening test. For this a candidate is required to speak for 3–4 minutes on a chosen topic. A similar length would be appropriate for **Task 1**.
- In **Task 2**, the Paired Task, it is important to offer both candidates an equal and sufficient amount of time to contribute for both speaking and listening. Short tasks of less than four minutes really do not give both candidates enough time to convincingly fulfil the criteria in the mark scheme for the middle and higher bands.

## General comments

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record Card and the Summary Form.

For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks but the assessment criteria should always be used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is encouraged and continues to yield some excellent results in both **Task 1** and **Task 2**.

## Comments on specific tasks

Responses to any of the three tasks do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks are generally more successful but a degree of spontaneity is

still required for marks to be awarded in the higher bands. Generally, responses to **Task 1** and **Task 2** where the candidates were interested in the topics and could demonstrate a personal involvement in the content were more successful than those where a topic had been imposed by the teacher. It is recommended that for **Task 1** the candidate chooses the topic with guidance from the teacher. For **Task 2** it may be that candidates are offered alternatives from which a choice can be made. For **Task 3** it is recognised that the teacher may choose the topic for logistical reasons.

### Task 1

Pleasingly, once again, a wide range of topics were undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when the choice of topic is made. More able candidates should be encouraged to choose more exacting and sophisticated topics that extend their abilities to construct a compelling argument within a period of approximately 3–4 minutes. The inclusion of an element of introspection and reflection is positively encouraged. Dramatic monologues in the voice of a chosen character have resulted in some very successful talks which stand out for their creativity and ingenuity.

*Some examples of productive Task 1 activities also include:*

- A significant event in my life and its effect on me
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- A critique of a favourite book, work of art or movie
- My passion for (e.g.) dance/playing a musical instrument
- My ideal holiday destination
- Are we ready for 5G (or any specific technological advance)?
- What we eat is who we are
- Why youth should be given a louder voice.

*Some examples of less successful Task 1 activities include:*

- Should cannabis be legalised (this has potential safeguarding issues)?
- Football (too generic and unfocused)
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort in which no individual choice is allowed (ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)
- Social media (unless a specific viewpoint is being argued)
- Gaming (generally too unfocused).

### Task 2

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about. Alternatively, engaging in a lively role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths also works well. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views. 'Football' and 'Social Media' remain popular topics but where there is no sense of audience or specific focus there will be little evidence to support a mark in the higher bands. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions. To this end, sufficient research and development should be built into the preparation time leading up to performance of the task.

Generally, entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or self-generated role plays, do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands because they do not fulfil the relevant criteria.

*Some examples of productive Task 2 activities include:*

- Arguing for and against a current affairs topic such as the benefits of artificial intelligence or responses to climate change
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well but may have differing views about
- Comparing the merits of two famous people where each candidate acts as a champion for one of the celebrities

- Acting as employers discussing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme)
- Marvel v DC.

*Some examples of less successful **Task 2** activities include:*

- Should cannabis be legalised (this has potential safeguarding issues)
- Interviews generally but specifically where one of the candidates acts solely as the interviewer (this is limiting for the candidate)
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort such as 'Room 101' in which no individual choice is allowed (ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)
- Role plays such as two neighbours arguing or a customer complaining to a sales assistant. The evidence of the present and previous series suggests these often rely too heavily on scripts, generally become vacuous arguments and limit the candidates' ability to demonstrate the required range of speaking and listening skills.

### **Task 3**

**Task 3** may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful so long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. It is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. It is, therefore, advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. A group should consist of no fewer than three members and it is advised that it does not exceed five candidates. A group consisting of three or four candidates is preferable for the logistical purpose of being able to assess each candidate's performance more accurately.

*Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:*

- A trial scene, possibly based on a literary text – e.g. 'Of Mice and Men', 'An Inspector Calls', 'A View From The Bridge', 'All My Sons'
- A radio discussion of a significant event from a work of literature involving the key characters
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity
- A meeting in which the candidates discuss their roles and possible contributions to a named community event
- A review of a named event from the perspective of those involved in its planning

### **General conclusions**

The general standard of assessment by centres is at the correct level. It is to their credit that centres have become very efficient in the administration of the component and in the choice of topics. It is very pleasing to observe that candidates undertaking speaking and listening activities continue to be enthusiastic about the experience and clearly benefit from careful planning and practice.